



# WRITING CENTER

Library and Academic Resource Center (LARC 229)

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## BASIC MLA FORMAT 8<sup>th</sup> EDITION

When you write a paper, often times your professor will ask you to format it according to specific guidelines. These guidelines will affect how the paper looks as well as how you document any outside sources that you may use in your paper. Different classes will use different types of formatting. English classes typically use MLA format. MLA stands for The Modern Language Association. Every few years, MLA updates and makes changes to its guidelines. In April 2016, MLA replaced its 7<sup>th</sup> edition with a new 8<sup>th</sup> edition. This handout will discuss the basic features of MLA 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Basic Features of the MLA Style:

- Use Times New Roman font, 12-point size.
- Double-space the whole paper.
- All margins should be set to 1 inch.
- Each page should have a “header” that includes your last name and page number at the upper right-hand corner of each page. This should be 1/2" from the top edge of the page.
- Your paper should begin with a heading in the left corner of the first page, including the following: your name, your instructor’s name, the class name and the date (for an example, see the attached sample essay on page 6). The date is written in Day Month Year format. For example: 03 January 2017.
- The title of the paper should be centered – do not underline, **bold** or “quote” your title.

### Citing Sources

MLA provides students with a way to document the outside resources they used in an academic essay (books, articles, etc.). There are two ways instructors expect students to document their sources: in-text, or parenthetical, citations throughout the essay, and a “Works Cited” page at the end of the document. The Works Cited page is a list of all of the resources used in the essay. MLA has certain guidelines on how to list these resources. We will discuss this more on the next page.

### Why Citing Sources Matters:

It is absolutely necessary that you learn how to properly cite any other sources that are not your own words or ideas used in composing an essay in order to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of using another person’s words or ideas and attempting to pass them off as your own. There are many ways to plagiarize, even if it is unintentional, “Buying a term paper from an online paper mill or ‘borrowing’ a friend’s completed assignment are obvious forms of plagiarism. But plagiarism also includes paraphrasing or summarizing material without properly citing its source” (Maimon 265). Plagiarism is a serious offense that comes with serious consequences. According to Valley College’s 2016-2017 Catalogue, the consequences for this offense include “warning, reprimand, restitution, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion” (196).

**For more information about plagiarism, see the Writing Center’s handout on plagiarism.**

The Works Cited Page MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (see example page 6?)

The works cited page provides a more in-depth way to document sources used in an academic paper and is a necessary part of any essay. According to the MLA Handbook, the Works Cited page “simplifies documentation by permitting you to make only brief references to these works in the text” (Gibaldi 144). The list should be a new page at the end of the document. In MLA 8, the same information is used for ALL citations, and this information should go in a certain order. Below is a guide for what information is required and the order of that information.

The Core Elements of a Works Cited Page Entry

In MLA 8, each piece of information required for a citation is called a “Core Element.” If an element cannot be found, it can be left out. You then move on to the next element. The chart below shows the elements you should be looking for and the order they go in. Each element should be followed by the punctuation mark shown in the chart. We will briefly discuss each element.

1	Author.
2	Title of source.
3	Title of container,
4	Other contributors,
5	Version,
6	Number,
7	Publisher,
8	Publication date,
9	Location.

**Author:** The author is the person or group primarily responsible for producing the work. List the name of the author with the last name first followed by a comma, then the first name. For example: Smith, John. If there are many authors, you can just list the first author and then add ‘et al.’

**Title:** The title is the next element included in an entry. If no author can be found, then this will often be the first element in your entry. The title is usually displayed obviously at the top of a web page or on the front of a book. The title of longer works (Books, Films, Albums, etc.) is written in *Italics* like this: *MLA Handbook*. Shorter works (song title, short story titles, article titles, etc.) are in quotation marks like this: “MLA Formatting and Style Guide.”

**Title of Container:** When the source being documented is part of a larger source, the larger source is considered the container that the source comes from. For example, the container for a web page is the whole website, and the container for a book chapter is the entire book. The container is always written in *Italics*. For example, *The Purdue Owl*.

**Other Contributors:** This is where you can list other people who contributed to the work that are not the author such as an editor, illustrator, director, etc. If there are no other contributors just skip it.

**Version:** You only need to add this information if the source has more than one edition.

**Number:** You only need to add this information if the source is one of a numbered sequence. For example, encyclopedias are a text that is too long to be printed in one book, so there will be several volumes. If this is the case, you should specify which volume you used.

**Publisher:** This is the organization that is responsible for making the source available to the public. Usually, the first or second page of a book will list the copyright information which includes the publisher. On a website, the publisher’s name can usually be found at the very bottom of the page. When citing a website, if the sponsor and website title are the same, you do not need to add the publisher.

Publication date: Write the full date including month and year if you can find it, otherwise just put the year. In a book or on a website the date can usually be found with the publisher information.

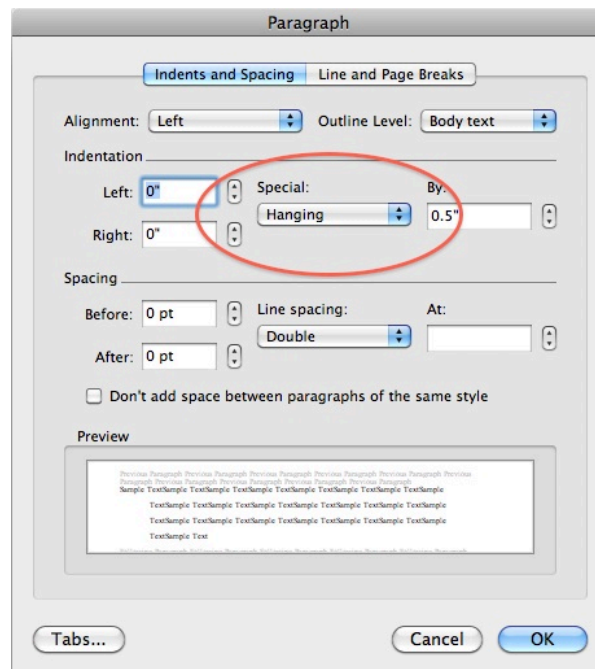
Location: In a book, the location can be a range of pages, especially if it is a large anthology. If you used the entire book, you do not need to include this information. For a web source, the location will be the web address, also known as the URL, or a D.O.I. (Digital Object Identifier) number.

Thus, this is the basic format for all citations:

Author. "Title." *Title of the container*. Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher's name, Date of publication, Location.

### Some basic features of the Works Cited Page

- The works cited page is a list of all the outside sources used in a paper
- It is always the last page of the paper, and it should be on its own page.
- Make sure to alphabetize the entries by author's last name,
- For any source you have that does not contain an author, list alphabetically the next piece of information available to you
- **All sources should have a hanging indentation:** There are a few ways to make a hanging indent on Microsoft word. The fastest way is to first add all of your citations to the Works Cited page. Then highlight the entire page and go to the "Format" area in the bar at the top of the screen. Click "Paragraph." There will be a pop-up window. In the "Indentation" section of that window, click the drop-down list under "Special" and choose "Hanging." This will apply the hanging indent to the entire Works Cited page all at once.



### In-text Citation Basics

In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done using “parenthetical citation.” This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote or a paraphrase. The in-text citation should contain the element that comes first in the Works Cited entry. In-text citations should never appear anywhere else in the sentence except at the end. Below are some common in-text citations with examples:

#### Book with an Author

This citation is one of the most common forms of in-text citation. You put the authors name and the page number where the quote was found in parenthesis at the end of the sentence. The period at the end of that sentence should come after the citation.

**Example:** In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the author demonstrates the significance of the objects by stating, “Nana cherished each blue-and-white porcelain piece” (Hosseini 3).

If you mention the author’s name in the sentence, it is not necessary to put the last name in the citation.

**Example:** In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini demonstrates the significance of the objects by stating, “Nana cherished each blue-and-white porcelain piece” (3).

#### Article with an Author

This citation is very similar to a book with an author. However, if it is an electronic source with no page numbers, then the page number can be left out.

**Example:** The Los Angeles Times on-line article “Storm brings widespread flooding across Northern California” states, “the storms have boosted seasonal rainfall totals to levels not seen in years across California” (Hamilton).

For an article in an online journal or an article from a database, give page numbers if they are available.

#### Article without an Author

If no author can be found for a source then the next element is used, which is the title. Thus, this will go in the parenthetical citation instead of the author’s name. You can shorten the title to the first few words.

**Example:** The Environmental Protection Agency article “The Impact of Global Warming in North America” explains that certain areas have higher concentrations of warming than others. It goes on to say that there are many global warming hotspots in North America most likely because this region has “more readily accessible climatic data. . .” (“Impact of Global Warming” 6).

#### Two Sources by the Same Author

If you are using two sources written by the same author, in order to let your reader know which work you are quoting, it is necessary to include the title of the work in addition to the author’s last name and the page number in the citation.

**Example:** Through Gabriel’s waking dream, the author offers his ideal version of death: “Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age” (Joyce, “The Dead” 748). While Gabriel’s reflection has some peace in it, Mr. Hynes laments opportunity lost to death saying, “He would have had his Erin famed,/ The green flag gloriously unfurled,/ Her statesmen, bards and warriors raised/ Before the nations of the World” (Joyce, “The Death of Parnell” 714).

Here are some more complicated in-text citations:

The Bible

In your first parenthetical citation, you want to make clear which Bible you're using (and underline or italicize the title), as each version varies in its translation, followed by book (do not italicize or underline), chapter and verse.

**Example:** Ezekiel saw "what seemed to be four living creatures," each with faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 1.5-10).

Poetry

When quoting poetry, make sure you add a forward slash (/) to show the reader where the line breaks would be. The parenthetical citation should contain the line numbers of the poem, not the page number.

**Example:** In Emily Dickinson's famous poem it states, "Because I could not stop for Death /He kindly stopped for me" (1-2).

These are the first two lines of the poem, thus the citation says 1-2.

Classic Play

When citing a play or poetry, the format you will use and the way you will cite it depends on when it was written. If it is a classic play (for example one written by Shakespeare or Sophocles), you will cite the play by title, act, scene and the line number or numbers where the quote can be found. Each new line will be separated by a slash.

**Example:** Shakespeare allows his hero to reveal his weakness when Hamlet questions, "To be, or not to be – that is the question" (Hamlet, 3.1.56-60).

Modern Play

When citing a modern play, you will use the same format you would use for any book for both the quote and citation.

**Example:** Torvald admits to Nora that his reputation is far more important to him than she is saying, "Nobody sacrifices his honor for the one he loves" (Ibsen 1312).

For a complete list of sources, please consult OWL Purdue or an MLA handbook.

Also try [www.easybib.com](http://www.easybib.com) for assistance with creating a work cited page, but be careful! You may still need to fill in some of the information yourself.

***This handout was based on the following sources:***

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Please visit our website at [www.lavc.edu/writingcenter](http://www.lavc.edu/writingcenter) for additional resources and services.

Jane Doe

Professor Smith

Political Science 1

13 January 2016

### The Constitutionality of the Patriot Act

The Constitution of the United States is an important document because it guarantees certain rights for every citizen. One of these rights is the right to privacy. In the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks, the U.S. government has knowingly encroached on its citizen's rights to privacy. While the government does have a responsibility to ensure the safety of its citizens, it also has a responsibility to protect their constitutional freedoms. Although some may argue that the United States government is only trying to protect our safety, they have violated people's right to privacy in several ways including the United States Patriot Act, increased Transportation Security Administration (TSA) rules, and public space cameras.

The United States Patriot Act is one way the government attempts to invade our privacy. Many people say that the act was only passed because it was rushed through Congress. The book *American Government and Politics Today* discusses different acts that were passed in recent years. According to this book, the Patriot Act "...was passed without meaningful review" (Bardes 133). The fact that it was not reviewed shows that the government is ignoring citizen's rights in the name of security. In addition, the New York Times article "Unconstitutional Sections of the Patriot Act" also discusses the lack of review. This article states that "many members of Congress hadn't even read the bill" before it was passed (Gosselin). This lack of review shows that the government is ignoring the constitution. Looking at the act itself, one can see that it denies Americans the privacy rights guaranteed in the Fourth Amendment ("Amendments"). The act bypasses the legal checks

Works Cited (*Center title*) ←

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