

MLA (8th Edition) – A Quick Guide

What is MLA style?

MLA is one style of referencing published by the Modern Language Association. This is the referencing style used by the English department at the University of Northampton. The latest version is MLA (8th edition) and works in a slightly different way to previous versions.

You can find detailed information in the [MLA handbook \(8th edition\)](#) and examples in the corresponding [MLA style centre](#). The [practice template will help you to format your own references](#).

How to use it?

When you use a source in your work to provide evidence this source needs to be acknowledged and referenced. If you use a citation within your academic work then this needs to be referenced within the essay. This would include the name of the author and the location of the information you are citing, usually a page number.

To cite works in your text you place the relevant source information in brackets after a quote or paraphrase.

For example, you can cite the author and the page number after the relevant quote.

Citation Examples

There are six questions that need consideration before making the decision (Murphy 43).

Murphy states that there are six questions that should be thought about before conclusions are made (43).

You will also need to provide a corresponding list with the complete details at the end of your academic work in a list called 'Works Cited'. This will include the list of core elements assembled in a specific order.

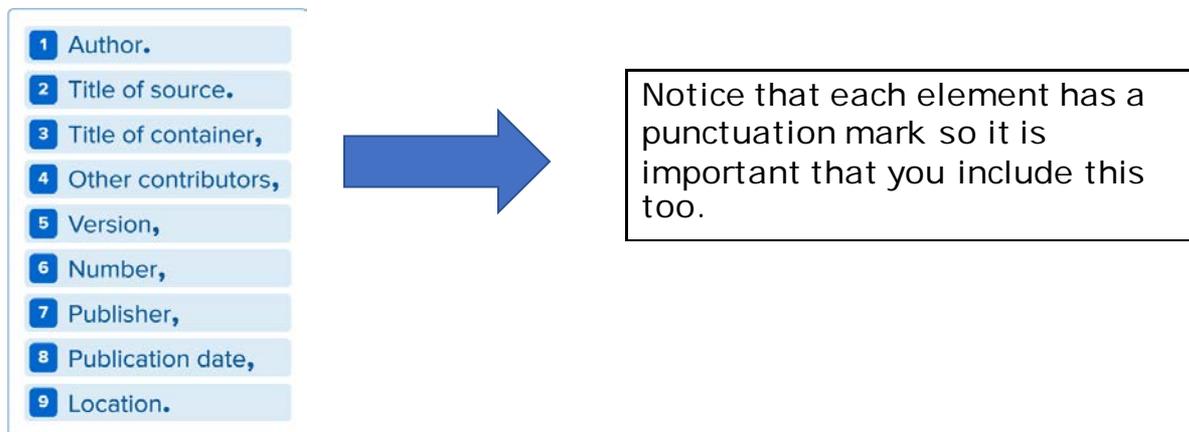
Example of 'Works Cited' which will be the list at the end of your work or essay.

Murphy, John. *Decision making for Managers*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.

Core Elements

Notice that each element has a punctuation mark so it is important that you include this too.

Each entry in the list of works cited is composed of facts common to most works - the MLA core elements. These should be assembled in a specific order as shown below.



Apply each core element, where applicable, to the resource you are referencing Always end the reference with a full stop.

Author

Give the author's last name, followed by first name.

Brooker, Christopher. *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. Continuum, 2005.

Title of Source

The source should be given in *italics* (e.g. for books or web pages) or quotation marks (e.g. for stories, journal articles, or songs)

Example:

Amis, Martin. *Money: A suicide note*. Penguin, 1985.

Title of container

A container is the larger work in which the source is located, e.g. a poem (source) in an anthology (container) or television episode (source) in a series (container).

In the example below, "The Dead" (story) is the source, and *Dubliners* (book) is the container.

Joyce, James. "The Dead." 1914. *Dubliners*, Penguin, 1996, pp. 199-256.

In the example below, the episode "A Study in Pink" is the source, and *Sherlock* the series, is the container.

McGuigan, Paul. "A Study in Pink." *Sherlock*, series one, episode one, BBC 1, 25 July 2010. Box of Broadcasts, www.learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/016455FF?bcast=50371831

Other contributors

Include other contributors, e.g. translators, illustrators.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*. Translated by Aylmer and Louise Maude, Vintage, 2010.

Version

Include edition or revision information.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. *Making Waves: New Cinema of the 1960s*. Revised and expanded ed., Bloomsbury, 2013.

Number

If a source is part of a numbered sequence, e.g. a journal article, or one in a series of books, include this information.

Raitt, George. "Lost in Austen: Screen Adaptation in a Post-Feminist World". *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2012, pp. 127-141.

Publisher

The publisher can usually be found on the title or copyright pages of books.

Filler, Nathan. *The Shock of the Fall*. Borough Press, 2014.

Date

If a source has been published twice, e.g. as a reprint, you may wish to include both dates.

Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. 1880. Edited with an introduction by A. S. Byatt, Penguin, 2003.

Location

You should give the specific location of the information you are citing. For print materials, give the page, preceded by p. or pp. for a range of pages. Note that for printed items, the location of the publisher is not required unless it dates from before 1900.

For web documents, give the DOI (digital object identifier) if provided, or the URL (web address), omitting <http://>. Additionally, give the date you found this information, using the format: Accessed DD Month Year.

Examples:

Thomas, Dylan. "Fern Hill." *A Dylan Thomas Treasury: Poems, Stories and Broadcasts*. Selected by Walford Davies, J. M. Dent, 1991, pp. 39-41.

Tempest, Kate. "Strange Light." *Kate Tempest*. www.katetempest.co.uk/audio. Accessed 15 August 2016.

Containers

The concept of containers is crucial to the MLA (8th Edition) style, and encompasses many types of resource that may 'contain' original works. For example, if you reference a short story that comes from an anthology, then the book or anthology that the story comes from is called the container.

Examples of MLA references

A source in a single container

An essay in a [book collection](#).

A [video on a web site](#).

A source in two containers

[A Journal Article Retrieved from a Database](#).