

## Citing Sources in the MLA Style

In college, you are constantly integrating information from various sources: class texts, instructor lectures, informative websites, related films, class discussions, etc. It is expected that you will synthesize this information in your essays. But it is also expected that, when needed, you will cite your sources correctly. "Citing sources" means that you tell the reader when you are using information or ideas that are not your own. If you fail to cite your sources then you are guilty of plagiarism.

There are many different guidelines for how to cite sources, but the Humanities uses the MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style. The MLA style involves two pieces that work together: in-text (meaning "in the body of your essay") citation and the works cited list. Both pieces must be present for MLA citation to work properly.

**in-text citation + works cited list = MLA citation style**

### In-Text Citation

For MLA citation, in the body of your essay you need to provide the author of the idea you are using and the page number from the book in which that idea appears. The following rules apply for both quotations and paraphrases. A paraphrase is a complete rewording of someone else's ideas. So while the words may be yours, the underlying concepts are not.

**With a signal phrase.** In order to introduce a quotation or paraphrase, it is generally a good idea to use a signal phrase: a series of words that lets the reader know that what is to follow is someone else's idea by naming who that someone is. If you use a signal phrase, then simply put the page number of the source in parentheses behind the quotation.

*Kimmel states that "homophobia is intimately interwoven with both sexism and racism" (216).*

The same is true even for a paraphrase.

*Kimmel believes that other forms of social injustice, such as racism and sexism, actually have homophobia as their common source (216).*

**Without a signal phrase.** If the author is not named in a signal phrase, which is often the case when you quote from literature, then both the last name of the author and the page number are included in the parentheses. Remember, cite the author of the words you are quoting, not necessarily the person whose name appears on the book you are using. No commas are necessary in the parentheses.

*"Women and gay men become the 'other' against which heterosexual men project their identities" (Kimmel 216).*

Like above, even if you are putting someone else's idea in your own words, you need to credit the author.

*In order to seem more masculine, heterosexual men distance themselves from women and homosexual men (Kimmel 216).*

**No page numbers.** Certain sources, especially websites, don't have page numbers (the exceptions with websites are .pdfs and scans of books). If paragraph numbers are provided,

then put "par." in the parentheses and put the appropriate number. Don't count paragraphs. Only give the number if it's provided in the source.

According to Sprinkle, "critics roundly condemned Chopin's novel" (par. 7).

If there are no numbers of any kind given, then you need to cite the author or title (when there is no author– see below) of the source. It is usually better to do this with a signal phrase.

Freire believes that "the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop... critical consciousness."

Yet if you are just citing data and don't wish to use a signal phrase, then put the author or title in parentheses.

According to research done in 2007, recent female college graduates "working full time earn 80 percent of what men earn" ("On Payday").

**No author.** Sometimes you may be unable to find the name of the author who wrote the words you wish to use. In this case, cite the full title (if it's short) or a shortened version of the title. If you shorten it, make sure it's similar to what is listed in the works cited entry so the reader may quickly find it. The following example is for an unpaginated website.

Transsexuals wish "to establish a permanent social role as a member of the gender with which they identify" ("Transsexualism").

### Works Cited List

So you have the names of authors and the corresponding page numbers in the body of your essay, but to what sources do these refer? This is where the works cited list comes in. Here you list the full publication information for your sources. A works cited list is not a bibliography; it contains *only* the sources you refer to in your paper. Since you use the last names of authors for the in-text citation, the works cited list is alphabetized by those same last names. If a works cited entry goes beyond one line, indent every line after the first (this is the opposite of how you format a normal paragraph).

**Print publications.** Here are the basic rules for how to create a works cited entry for nonperiodical print media (meaning books, not magazines or newspapers). These rules apply to books with a single author. For citing a work within a collection, such as an anthology, see below.

1. Name of the author or editor
2. Title of the work in italics
3. Edition used, if there is more than one
4. Number of volume used, if applicable
5. City of publication, colon, name of the publisher, comma, and year of publication.
6. Medium of publication: *print*

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2008. Print.

**Work in an anthology.** An anthology is a collection of texts, usually essays or short stories. When using a piece from an anthology, be sure to cite the person who wrote the words or ideas you are using, not the editor of the book.

1. Name of the author of the part of the anthology being cited, such as the author of the essay or short story in the collection
2. Title of the piece, usually in quotation marks
3. Name of the translator, if applicable
4. Title of the anthology, italicized
5. Edition used, if there is more than one
6. Editor(s) of the anthology; start with *Ed.* ("edited by") and then put the name(s). If there is more than one editor, list them in the order they appear on the cover or on the title page.
7. City of publication: publisher name, year of publication.
8. The entire range of page numbers for the piece you are citing, *not* just the pages numbers you are citing
9. Medium of publication: *print*

Rose, Mike. "I Just Wanna Be Average." *Rereading America*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2007. 161-172. Print.

**Class reader.** Many instructors ask you to buy a packet of reading materials for a class. Usually, the instructor will include the original publication information for each text. Cite that first, then add *Rpt. in* ("Reprinted in"), the title of the collection, and the new publication information. If the original publication information is not supplied, then treat the reader like an anthology.

Rose, Mike. "I Just Wanna Be Average." *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. New York: Free Press-Macmillan, 1989. Rpt. in *Mercury Reader: EWRT1A-62 Reader*. Ed. Nick Mullins. New York: Pearson, 2009. 1-15. Print.

**Web publications.** The web makes research much easier, but it also presents a lot of problems. Web publications vary greatly in quality and style. You must carefully assess the accuracy and authority of every text you find on the web. In terms of creating a works cited entry, not all web publications provide the information you need. But do your best. Sometimes information you need will be in small print at the bottom of a page or on the homepage of the site you are on. Here are the basic rules for how to create a works cited entry for a web publication.

1. Name author, editor, or corporate author. If none is provided, such as with an article from an on-line encyclopedia, then start with step 2.
2. Title of the work, italicized if work is independent, or in quotation marks if work is part of a larger work.
3. Title of website the source appears on, italicized (if different than in step 2).
4. Version of edition (if applicable).
5. Publisher or sponsor of the site; if none given, put *N.p.*
6. Date of publication; if none given, put *n.d.*
7. Medium of publication: *web*
8. Date of access, when you viewed the site (day, month, and year)

Devor, A.H. "How Many Sexes? How Many Genders? When Two Are Not Enough."

*University of Victoria*. Univ. Victoria, 29 June 2007. Web. 7 May 2009.

**Web source originally published in print.** If the web source you are using is a scan from a book or if the website provides print publication information for the source, then provide the print publication information as part of your works cited entry. Sometimes you may have to hunt for this information. It may be listed at the very bottom of the page in small type or on a page leading into the one that contains the text you are citing. Once you have located the print information, start your entry using the appropriate rules governing the original print source. Then, instead of putting "print" at the end, put the following information:

1. Title of database or website (italicized)
2. Medium of publication: *Web*
3. Date of access (day, month, year)

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. New York: Feminist Press, 1973.

*University of Virginia Library*. Web. 28 May 2009.

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Brooklyn, 1855. *The Walt Whitman Archive*. Web. 12 March 2007.

**More information.** Most all writing handbooks contain the MLA guidelines. The MLA updated its rules in April of 2009, so keep that in mind if you refer to a handbook. The new rules mainly apply to how you assemble works cited entries. You can always order the MLA's own handbook: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, seventh edition. The best on-line resource for MLA style that I have found is *The Owl at Purdue*: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/675/01/>