MLA (Modern Language Association) Style: A Basic Guide

The Modern Language Association publishes the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, which is a guide to MLA style for the use of students in English and foreign literature classes. Some professors in other humanities disciplines also prefer that students use MLA style; other prefer the *Chicago Manual* style.

The following is a very brief guide to MLA style for books, journal articles, and web sites. For more detailed information, see Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. LB2369 G53 2009. The library has copies at the first-floor learning commons and at the circulation desk. The handbook offers advice on research and evaluating sources, including web sites, as well as instructions and examples of preparing in-text citations and lists of Works Cited.

**Note:** The 7th edition includes important changes: the Works Cited now *must include the format* of the document being cited: Print, Web, CD, Film, and so on. For articles and other documents found on the Internet, the citation must include the format Web., followed by the date of access in the form date Name of Month year. If the *full text* of the article was found in a database, also include the name of the database.

### Citing Sources within the Paper.

The MLA style uses citations within text instead of notes to indicate the source of quotations or ideas taken from other sources.

This is an example of an in-text parenthetical citation. Note that the period (.) follows the parenthetical citation:

> It is evident that Robin Hood's outlaw life is in protest of *something*--bad administration, unjust rule--but the emphasis is on its jollity, its merriment and fellowship, and Robin's fundamental piety and loyalty to his rightful king: “...the outlaws were not invoked as Radical heroes and their self-government in Sherwood Forest was not seen as a form of proto-socialism” (Banham 30).

This citation would be explained at the end of the paper in the Works Cited as:


### Listing Works Cited at the end of the paper

Here is a sample Works Cited list from the Robin Hood paper excerpted above. Note that

- The title, Works Cited, is centered
- The list is alphabetized by the authors' last names.
- When no author is given, alphabetize by title (not including "the," "an," or "a."
- The list is double-spaced.
- The second work by an author uses ---. instead of repeating the author's name.
- If the article is electronic there may be no page numbers: use N. pag. instead.
Works Cited


Here are the formats, with examples, of books, articles from reference books, articles from journals (paper and electronic), and web sites. Check the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for more detailed information.

**Books** (MLA Guide section 5.5.2):

 Format:

 Author's lastname, Author's first name. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date. Format. (date accessed *if electronic*).

 Example:

If there is an editor and no author, list by the editor's name and add: , ed.

Example:

If there is more than one author, add a comma and the other names in firstname, lastname order:

Example:

**Articles from Reference Books** (MLA Handbook section 5.5.7):

Format:
Author's lastname, Author's firstname. "Title of Article." Title of Reference Book.

Author or editor. Vol. containing article. Place of Publication: Publisher, date.

Format.

Examples:


**Articles from Journals** (MLA Handbook Section 5.4):

Format:
Author's last name, Author's firstname. "Title of Article.” Title of Journal volume. number (date): pages. Format. Database name if applicable. Date Month Year accessed if electronic.

Examples:

**Web sites (MLA Handbook section 5.6):**
The format is based on that for print materials, with the addition of the date of electronic publication or last revision (if given), the date accessed, and the URL. If no author's name is given, start with the title.

**Format:**
Author's last name, Author's firstname. "Title of 'Article' within web site." Date of electronic publication, if given. *Title of Website.* Sponsoring Organization. Date Accessed in day month year format. <URL>.

**Example:**

http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/rhibib.htm

**Note:** If your project is a lengthy one, with many sources, you may wish to use RefWorks. You will need to create an account and take the online tutorial. When you get to the point of choosing an "output style," select *MLA 7th edition.* But be aware that there seem to be errors in RefWorks version of MLA. Some databases will also create citations in MLA style. Make sure they specify 7th edition and check to make certain they are correct!

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