

## 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*. 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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:

Banham, Jennifer, ed. *William Morris and the Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984. Print.

### 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

- Banham, Jennifer, ed. *William Morris and the Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984. Print.
- Bustin, Dillon. " 'The Morrow's Uprising': William Morris and the English Folk Revival." *Folklore Forum* 15(1982):17-38. Print.
- Knight, Stephen. "Bold Robin Hood: The Structures of a Tradition." *Southern Review* 20(1987):152-167. Print.
- . *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. Print.
- Nagy, Joseph Falaky. "The Paradoxes of Robin Hood." *Folklore* 91(1980): 198-210. Web. 27 August 2009.
- The Robin Hood Project*. Robbins Library, University of Rochester. 23 May 2006. Web. <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/rh/rhlitbib.htm>>

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:

Dorson, Richard. *The British Folklorists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968. Print.

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

Example:

Lucas, John, ed. *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Methuen, 1971. Print.

If there is more than one author, add a comma and the other names in first name, last name order:

Example:

Dobson, R.B., and J. Taylor. *The Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1989. Print.

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

Format:

Author's lastname, Author's first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Reference Book*.

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

Format.

Examples:

Taylor, John. "Robin Hood." *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. Joseph Strayer, ed. Vol. 10. . New York: Scribners, 1987. Print.

Lambdin, Robert T. "[Robin Hood](#)." *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*. Westport: Greenwood, 2000. Credo Reference. Web. 4 March 2014.

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

Format:

Author's last name, Author's first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* volume.

number (date): pages. Format. Database name if applicable. Date Month Year

accessed if electronic.

Examples:

Gray, Douglas. "The Robin Hood Ballads." *Poetica* 18.1 (1984):1-39. Print.

Field, Sean. "Devotion, Discontent, and the Henrician Reformation: The Evidence of the Robin Hood Stories." *Journal of British Studies* 41.1(2002): 6-22. Web. JSTOR. 23 May 2010.

**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:

Chandler, John. "Robin Hood: Critical Studies." *The Robin Hood Project*. Robbins Library, University of Rochester. 23 May 2006.  
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/rhbib.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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> edition and check to make certain they are correct!*