

A QUICK GUIDE TO MLA DOCUMENTATION

This material is based on information found in Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003). It was updated in February 2009 in response to new guidelines issued by the Modern Language Association.

In-Text Citations

The MLA Documentation format requires writers to acknowledge the sources they use, exactly what information within the essay is derived from each source, and exactly where in that source the information can be found. MLA format accomplishes this by using in-text citations that are keyed to a Works Cited list at the end of the essay. The in-text citations are placed as close as possible to the quoted or paraphrased material taken from the source, before any punctuation (commas, periods, etc.).

Examples of Parenthetical Citations:

For example, the German father from a Polish town the poem speaks to could easily be seen as Otto Plath, Sylvia Plath's own German father from "a Prussian town in the Polish Corridor" (Stevenson 4).

As Gruesser states, Poe's choice of a name for the character adds to this idea, and the insertion of his wife further stresses the concept: "Put simply, Fortunato is fortune's favorite--the Lady Fortunato, none other than

Lady Luck--and . . . Montresor, in contrast, is rooted in the physical world" (129).

As well as being "one of the originators of both horror and detective fiction," Poe was "one of the first critics to focus primarily on the effect of the style and of the structure in a literary work" ("Edgar Allan Poe").

Note: The in-text citation begins with whatever comes first in the works cited list entry. Typically, this is the author's last name. The name is followed by a space and the page number(s) where the information can be found.

Some Exceptions: If the work has no author mentioned, the title, or a shortened version of it, is used for the in-text citation. The title is also used if you have more than one work by the same author; in this case, the title or a shortened version follows the author's name. In some cases, the author's name may be stated within the sentence. In this case, use only the page number(s) in the following citation.

The Works Cited Page

The Works Cited page is a complete list of all the works a writer cites in the essay. The brief parenthetical citation directs a reader to the list of works cited, which then gives the reader more complete information for that source. The Works Cited page is found at the end of the essay.

Sample Works Cited Page:

Works Cited

“Edgar Allan Poe.” Poetry Exhibits. 9 Aug. 2001. *The Academy*

of American Poets. 24 Sept. 2003. Web. 14 Jan. 2009.

Gruesser, John. “Poe’s The Cask of Amontillado.” *Explicator*

56.3 (1998): 129-130. Print.

Stevenson, Anne. *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath*.

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Print.

Note: The words “Works Cited” are centered at the top of the page (in plain type with no punctuation). The entire page is double-spaced (including between entries and between the words “Works Cited” and the first entry) and the entries are in alphabetical order by first letter. Each entry’s first line is typed even with the left margin and every following line is indented one-half inch (one tab); this is called a hanging indent.

Format for the Most Common Works Cited Page Entries:

Books with One Author:

Author’s name (inverted). *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publishing company, Date of publication. Publication medium.

Example:

Stevenson, Anne. *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Print.

Books with More than One Author:

In citations for books with multiple authors, authors’ names should be given in the same order as they appear on the title page. The first author’s name should be inverted; following names are written as normal. Even if two authors have the same last name, state each in full. Names are followed by a comma, with the word “and” before the final name. A period follows the final name. If there are more than three authors, you may provide only the first author's name (inverted) followed by “et al.” (in plain text).

Example:

Mathabane, Mark and Gail Mathabane. *Love in Black and White: the Triumph of Love Over Prejudice and Taboo*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992. Print.

Works from an Anthology:

Citations for works from an anthology generally contain the author’s name, the title of the work, the translator of the work (if any, with the abbreviation Trans. before it), the title of the anthology, the editor, translator, and / or compiler of the anthology (with the abbreviation Ed.,

Trans., or Comp. before the names), the city of publication, the publishing company, the date of publication, the page numbers for the entire work and the publication medium.

Examples:

Kafka, Franz. "A Hunger Artist." Trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir. *Literature*. 4th ed. Comp. James H. Pickering and Jeffrey D. Hoeper. New York: Macmillan, 1994. 350-55. Print.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself. Nation of Letters: A Concise Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Stephen Cushman and Paul Newlin. St. James: Brandywine P, 1998. 249-77. Print.

Note: The entry begins with the author of the specific work you are citing. The title of the work is in quotations unless the work was published independently (for example, a play or novel); these works are italicized. The names of the translator of the piece and editor, compiler, and translator of the anthology are not inverted.

Articles:

Author's name. "Title of the article." *Name of Journal* Volume number.Issue number (date of journal): page numbers of entire piece. Publication medium.

Note: No spaces are used between the volume number and issue numbers.

Examples:

Costello, Bonnie. "Elizabeth Bishop's Impersonal Personal." *American Literary History* 15.3 (2003): 334-66. Print.

Gruesser, John. "Poe's The Cask of Amontillado." *Explicator* 56.3 (1998): 129-130. Print.

Electronic Sources:

Because so many different forms of material can be found on the Internet, documentation for electronic sources is complicated. Each type of source has its own rules for documentation. For complete information, refer to pages 207-35 (section 5.9) of the MLA Handbook.

For material from an electronic source you should provide the information needed for any print version of the material (if relevant) and follow this with the relevant information for the electronic version. Entries generally contain the author or editor's name (inverted), the title of the work (article, poem, short story, etc.) in quotation marks, the publication information for any print version of the material, the title of the online site (italicized), the name of any editor for the site with the abbreviation Ed. before it (if any editor is given), any version or volume number given for the source, the date of the electronic publication of the material or the date of the last update for the site, the range or total number of paragraphs,

pages, or sections (if they are numbered; do not use the page numbers given on the printout because they may differ from printer to printer), the name of any sponsoring organization or group, the publication medium, and the date you accessed the material.

Not all of this information may be available or relevant. You should provide as much of this information as you can, so that the reader could find the material in either the print or electronic forms.

Examples:

Connor, Richard, Andrew Seidl, Larry VanTassell, and Neal Wilkins. "Summary and Conclusions." *United States Grasslands and Related Resources: An Economic and Biological Trends Assessment*. June 2001. Texas Agriculture Extension Service. 8 Feb. 2003. Web. 19 Feb. 2007.

Grasslands. 2003. National Wildlife Federation. 9 Feb. 2003. Web. 19 Feb. 2007.

"Edgar Allan Poe." Poetry Exhibits. 9 Aug. 2001. *The Academy of American Poets*. 24 Sept. 2003. Web. 14 Jan. 2009.

Example 1. Newspaper 2. Magazine:

Painter, Jim. "Local Teachers to Stand up to Teachers' Retirement Board Friday." *The Lima News*. 14 Aug. 2003. Web. 14 Aug. 2003.

Beavan, Colin. "Underwater Daredevils." *Atlantic Online*. May 1997. Web. 14 Aug. 2003.

Note: For additional help, see the [MLA Handbook](#), visit the Writing Center Web Page <<http://www.lima.ohio-state.edu/writing/>>, ask your professor, or talk to a Writing Center tutor. The Writing Center is located in room 310, Galvin Hall.

