



The Writing Center at Bristol Community College

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The MLA Format

(Adapted from the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed.)

The Modern Language Association uses a specific format for writing research and other scholarly papers. This format is used primarily in the disciplines of English, literature, and other languages. The standards set forth in this format allow readers a logical method for understanding the writing presented in a piece of scholarly writing. The MLA requires *in-text citations* that are referenced on a *works cited* page at the end of a piece of scholarly writing.

In-Text Citations

As a rule, all citations should include the author's last name, a space and a page number where the information is found. In cases where the author is unknown, use a shortened form of the title followed by the page number. Some documents, such as web pages, are not paginated. In these instances, use only the author's name or title of the work. Only if paragraphs are numbered in the original should paragraph numbers be used in-text.

In-text citations must correspond to a reference on the Works Cited page. Examples listed below show the various methods for effective citation.

Author's Name Not Given in the Text

When the author's name is not mentioned in the text, place the last name in parentheses at the end of the sentence followed by the page number.

According to one scholar, a tutor's "cultural expectations" can significantly influence a tutoring session (Hayward 1).

Author's Name Given in the Text

If the author's name is part of the sentence, only place the page number in parentheses.

Hayward states that "[s]ilence is often uncomfortable for people in the United States" (11).

Unknown Author

If the author is unknown in a work that you are citing, use a shortened form of the title in the citation.

According to one study, the number one threat to grizzly bears is "human caused mortality" ("Grizzly Bear").

Citing Indirect Sources

If the material cited comes from a second-hand source, i.e. not the original work, then cite the material indicating that the information was not the original writing.

The linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf claims that for people who perceive nothing but the color blue "[t]he term blue would convey no meaning" (qtd. in Hayward 3).

Preparing a Works Cited List

The Works Cited section lists all the works that you have cited within the body of your paper. The items are complete and are to be placed in alphabetical order by author's last name (or, in the case of an unknown author, by the title of the source). The following is a sample works cited list:

Works Cited

- Journal article → Barthla, Frederick, and Joseph Murphy. "Alcoholism in Fiction." *Kansas Quarterly* 17.2 (1982): 77-80. Print.
- Law Case → Brown v. Board of Educ. 347 US 483-96. Supreme Court of the US. 1954. *Supreme Court Collection*. Legal Information Inst., Cornell U Law School, n.d. Web. 3 Aug. 2007.
- Journal article in a database → Goldsmith, Susan S. "MCAS Circa 2001: As Good as It Should Be?" *Journal of Education* 183.1 (2002): 68-95. *MasterFILE Premier*. Web. 28 Apr. 2003.
- Newspaper → Greely, Andrew. "Today's Morality Play: The Sitcom." *New York Times* 17 May 1987, late ed., sec. 2: 1+. Print.
- Work in Anthology → Hayward, Nancy. "Insights into Cultural Divides." *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*. Ed. Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook. 2004. 1-15. Print.
- Sound Recording → Holiday, Billie. "God Bless the Child." Rec. 9 May 1941. *The Essence of Billie Holiday*. Columbia, 1991. CD.
- Magazine → Isaccson, Walter. "Will the Cold War Fade Away?" *Time* 27 Feb. 1987: 40-45. Print.
- Film/Video → *It's a Wonderful Life*. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Mitchell. RKO, 1946. Film.
- Interview → Lansbury, Angela. Interview. *Off-Camera: Conversations with the Makers of Prime-Time Television*. By Richard Levinson and William Link. New York: Plume-Nal, 1986. 72-86. Print.
- Online Posting → Lavagnino, John. "OCR and Handwriting." Online Posting. 7 May 2002. Humanist Discussion Group. Web. 24 May 2002.
- Book → Marquart, James W., Sheldon Ekland Olson, and Jonathan R. Sorensen. *The Rope, the Chair, and the Needle: Capital Punishment in Texas, 1923-1990*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1994. Print.
- Personal → interview Pei, I. M. Personal interview. 22 July 1993.
- Telephone → interview Poussaint, Alvin F. Telephone interview. 10 Dec. 1990.
- Web page → Quade, Alex. "Elite Team Rescues Troops Behind Enemy Lines." *CNN.com*. Cable News Network. 19 March 2007. Web. 15 May 2008.
- Magazine article on the web → Steinberger, Mike. "A Spoonful of Vino." *Slate* 5 Mar. 2009. Web. 07 Apr. 2009.
- Multivolume work → Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl." 1863. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Paul Lauter et al. 5th ed. Vol. B. Boston: Houghton, 2006. 2601-09. Print.