Citing Sources in MLA Style

In most college courses, we are asked to read and incorporate the writing of others into our own. Whenever you take ideas, paraphrase, or quote from a source, you need to indicate in your paper the sources from which the information came.

Examples are presented later in this document for citing various kinds of sources in MLA format. The sources are divided into the three major sections shown below. Follow one of these links if you want to skip directly to a section of examples. (If you do, please note that all entries should be double-spaced; we have used single spaces in this document simply to save room.)

- **Books** (#books)
- **Articles in Newspapers and Periodicals** (#periodicals)
- **On-line Sources** (#online)

WHAT FORMAT SHOULD YOU USE?

We have many sets of documentation guidelines from which to choose, and most disciplines require a specific style of documentation. **For any paper that requires documentation, however, you should first ask your instructor or professor which citation style you should use.**

The following guidelines and examples are from the *Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, edited by Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. This set of guidelines, or “style sheet,” is preferred in English courses and other humanities courses here at IU. Again, check with your professor or instructor about which style sheet is appropriate for your particular class.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION MUST BE DOCUMENTED?

When we use information from a source that is not common knowledge, and incorporate it into our own writing, we have to document where it came from, as in the following example:

> According to U.S. Senate staff member Paul C. Light, legislation on Capitol Hill is often surrounded by a “fog of politics” (11).

Note that this writer tells her reader the information needed for finding her source: we know that the quotation came from page 11 of a book by Paul C. Light.

Then, at the end of your paper, you need to give your reader the rest of the information necessary for looking up the reference. This is usually a separate “Works Cited” page, and it is typically arranged by authors’ last names, so that your reader can find the author referred to in your paper.

EXAMPLES

The following are sample entries for the most commonly used types of sources. If you have a source not covered here, consult the complete MLA handbook. These entries should be double-spaced; we have used single spaces here simply to save room.
BOOKS

Citation entries for books generally list three main sections for information about your source:

1. author name: last name first;
2. full title of the work: book and journal titles are underlined or italicized; article titles are put in quotation marks; and
3. publication information: city of publication, name of publisher, and date.

Each of these sections is followed by a period and two spaces.

I. A Book by a Single Author:


II. An Anthology:


Note that in all three of these entries

1. the title is underlined or italicized;
2. there are two spaces between the three sections of the entry;
3. often-used words, such as “University” and “Press” use only initials, i.e., UP means “University Press;” no periods are used;
4. only the first line is at the margin; all other lines are indented five spaces; and
5. there is only one blank space after each colon.

III. A Book by Two or More Persons:


Note here that only the FIRST author’s name is inverted; the rest in the list are in regular order.

IV. An Anonymous Book:


V. A Work in an Anthology:

Since articles are only a part of a larger work, you must also provide your reader with page numbers. The numbers should be for the whole article, not just for the pages you have used.


Note that the title of the play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, is underlined or italicized (as all play titles are), as is the title of the anthology. “Works Cited” pages follow regular rules of capitalization, underlining, and quotation marks for titles.

Lazard, Naomi. “In Answer to Your Query.” *The Norton Book*
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ARTICLES IN NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Citation entries for newspapers and periodicals generally list three main sections of information about your source:

1. author name: last name first;
2. full title of the work: newspaper and periodical titles are underlined or italicized; article titles are put in quotation marks; and
3. publication information: this will vary according to the amount of information available--follow the examples.

Each of these sections is followed by a period and two spaces.

I. A Newspaper Article:


II. A Letter to the Editor:

Identify letters by adding the description, “Letter,” after the name of the author. Do not underline the work or put it in quotation marks.

III. An Article from a Magazine:

A. a magazine published weekly or every two weeks:


Note that this entry gives the full date. Do not include volume and issue numbers.

B. a magazine published every month or two months:


This entry states only the month. Again, you should not include issue or volume numbers in your citation.

Abbreviate the names of months so that they take up three spaces plus a period, e.g., Aug. The following months may be spelled out: May, June, and July.

IV. An Article in a Scholarly Journal:

A. a journal that pages each issue separately:


Note that this entry provides the volume number (13) and issue number (3) separated by a period and followed by the year.

B. a journal with continuous pagination: (i.e., the numbers in one issue begin where the preceding

Note that this entry supplies the volume number (50) before the year.

V. An Anonymous Article:

If no author is given for an article, begin with the title and alphabetize the title.


VI. An Article With a Title That Contains a Quotation or a Title Within Quotation Marks: