

MLA Citations Made Simple: A Student Guide

The use of MLA citations helps readers see how your sources support your statements and it encourages and ensures academic honesty.



Use the QR code to make an appointment with the Writing Center for additional help.

MLA citations have two main parts:

- In-text citations (inside your paper)
- Works Cited page (at the end)

These two parts always work together.

In-Text Citations (MLA)

The Basic Formula

(Author Page#)

Examples:

(Smith 42)

If you mention the author in your sentence:

Smith argues that time management is a major challenge for college students (42).

Common In-Text Situations

No author? Use a shortened title:

("Study Habits" 15)

Two authors:

(Lopez and Kim 76)

Three or more authors:

(Nguyen et al. 203)

Online source with no page numbers?

Use the author only: (Smith)

Or the title if no author is listed

EXAMPLE MLA Paragraph with In-Text Citations

Before 1820 and prior to the new knowledge farmers were creating, farmers who wanted print information about agriculture had their choice of agricultural almanacs and even local newspapers to receive information (Danhof 54). After 1820, however, agricultural writing took more forms than almanacs and newspapers. From 1820 to 1870, agricultural periodicals were responsible for spreading new knowledge among farmers. In his published dissertation *The American Agricultural Press 1819-1860*, Albert Lowther Demaree presents a "description of the general content of [agricultural journals]" (xi). These journals began in 1819 and were written for farmers, with topics devoted to "farming, stock raising, [and] horticulture" (12).

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The Works Cited Page Basic Rules:

- Starts on a new page titled Works Cited.
- Entries are alphabetized by author's last name (or article title if no author), Double-spaced,
- Hanging indent (second line and beyond indented).

Core Elements of an MLA Citation

MLA uses a flexible system called core elements.

Not every source will have all the elements, but you should attempt to find them all each time.

They should appear in this order:

Author. Title of source. Title of container, Other contributors, Version,
Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

Always review needed punctuation marks and stylistic requirements for each element in your citation.

Common Examples

Article from a Database or Website

Author. "Title of Article." *Title of Website or Journal*,
Publisher, Date, URL.

Example:

Garcia, Elena. "Why Feedback Matters." *College Writing Review*, 12 Mar. 2022,
www.collegewritingreview.org/feedback.

Article from an Online Database

Lopez, Maria. "Study Skills for Success." *Journal of Student Learning*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2020, pp. 45–60.
JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/123456.

Book

Author. Title of Book. Publisher, Year.

Example:

Smith, Jordan. *Writing in College*. Academic Press, 2021.

Entire Web Page

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008,
owl.english.purdue.edu/owl.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED PAGE (LAST PAGE OF YOUR DOCUMENT)

FORMATTING BASICS

- Start on a separate page
- Alphabetized by what appears first in the entry
- Do not Bold the title
- Double spaced (do not include extra spaces between entries)
- Use Hanging Indents (the second and all other subsequent lines should be indented for each entry)
- All entries end with a period.
- Visit the Purdue OWL website to clarify and confirm all citations. (<https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html>)

Works Cited

American Allergy Association. *Allergies in Children*. Random House, 1998.

An Inconvenient Truth. Directed by Davis Guggenheim, Paramount, 2006.

Ball, Lucille. *Love, Lucy*. Berkley, 1996.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Edited by Margaret Smith, Oxford UP, 1998.

Brubaker, Bill. "New Health Center Targets County's Uninsured Patients." *Washington Post*, 24
May 2007, p. LZ01.

"Business: Global Warming's Boom Town; Tourism in Greenland." *The Economist*, 26 May
2007, p. 82.



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Sample MLA Paper (Page 1)

GENERAL FORMATTING NOTES:

FONT SIZE 12

ONE SPACE AFTER PERIODS

1" MARGINS ON ALL SIDES

IN UPPER RIGHT

MARGIN

STUDENT LAST NAME PAGE NUMBER

Gleason 1

STUDENT NAME Addie Gleason

PROFESSOR Dr. Graves

COURSE ENG 105

DATE 2 Feb. 2026

TITLE (DO NOT BOLD)

Can AI Create True Art?

**INDENT NEW
PARAGRAPHS**

This is a sample of the first page of a properly formatted MLA-style paper. MLA format uses one-inch margins on all sides, double spacing throughout the entire document, and a readable font such as 12-point Times New Roman. The header appears in the top right corner of each page and includes the writer's last name followed by the page number.

**DOUBLE SPACE
ENTIRE
DOCUMENT**

The heading in the upper left corner of the first page includes the student's name, the instructor's name, the course name, and the date. Each element appears on its own line and is also double spaced. The title is centered and uses standard capitalization, but it is not bolded, italicized, or underlined.

**NO EXTRA
SPACES
BETWEEN
PARAGRAPHS**

The body paragraphs begin immediately after the title with no extra spacing. Each paragraph is indented one-half inch from the left margin. MLA format emphasizes consistency and clarity, so spacing, font, and alignment should remain the same throughout the paper.