

MLA Documentation: Overview



Writers in the humanities often use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style for documenting sources. MLA documentation of sources consists of the following two components: in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

In-text citations:

- appear wherever you use information or ideas from one of your sources, usually at the end of the sentence in which the information or idea appears.
- provide the **author's last name** and the **page number** of the material you are citing
- refer the reader directly to an entry on the Works Cited page

Most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times cell phones are a factor in accidents; as of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (Sundeen 2).

Works Cited page:

- a list of all your sources that appears at the end of your paper
- does not include any source you ended up *not* using

Sundeen, Matt. "Cell Phones and Highway Safety: 2000 State Legislative Update." National Conference of State Legislatures. Dec. 2000. 9 pp. 27 Feb. 2001 <<http://ncsl.org/programs/esnr/cellphone.pdf>>.

How to use this system:

As with any documentation system, close consultation with a good reference guide is essential to using the system correctly. We recommend the following which go into detail about the precise format of in-text citations and Works Cited entries for all types of sources.

- **green section of *LB Brief* (a common writing handbook)**
- **Diana Hacker:** <http://dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html>
- **Purdue OWL:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

Format of in-text citations:

Refer to your MLA guide for models and variations. Below are some common examples of MLA in-text citations:

Author mentioned in a "signal phrase," only the page number in the citation:
Christine Haughney reports that shortly after Japan made it illegal to use a handheld phone while driving, "accidents caused by using the phones dropped by 75 percent" (8).

Author *not* mentioned in a signal phrase; author and the page number in the citation:
Most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times cell phones are a factor in accidents; as of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (Sundeen 2).

When you do not have a page number, do not include one! Just give the author's name.

When you know *neither* the author nor the page number, include only an abbreviated form of the title in the citation. (Article titles get quotation marks; book titles get italics.)

As of 2001, at least three hundred towns and municipalities had considered legislation regulating use of cell phones while driving ("Lawmakers").

Citing an Indirect Source: When a source quotes someone else's words, and you want to quote those words in your paper, format the citation as you otherwise would, but put the phrase "qtd. in" before it.

According to Richard Retting, "As the comforts of home and the efficiency of the office creep into the automobile, it is becoming increasingly attractive as a work space" (qtd. in Kilgannon 23).

Format of Works Cited entries:

With your guide to MLA (handbook or reference) close at hand, do the following:

- Examine each source separately and determine what each source *is* (i.e., is it an article from a journal? A chapter from a book? A website?)
- Turn to your MLA guide and find the entry for that type of source. Most handbooks will tell you what belongs in the entry and how to format it, and give you a model.
- Following the model, create a citation for each of your sources.

Here are some common Works Cited entries:

Book:

Tan, Amy. The Bonesetter's Daughter. New York: Putnam, 2001.

Article from a journal accessed through an online database:

Barrera, Rebeca María. "A Case for Bilingual Education." Scholastic Parent and Child Nov.-Dec. 2004: 72-73. Academic Search Premier. EBSCOhost. St. Johns River Community Coll. Lib., Palatka, FL. 1 Feb. 2005 <<http://search.epnet.com>>.

Page from a website:

Shiva, Vandana. "Bioethics: A Third World Issue." NativeWeb. 15 Sept. 2004 <<http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/shiva.html>>.

All examples have been taken from the "Humanities" page of Diana Hacker's website: http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html .
