Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation

MLA is often used in the humanities (except history) and the fine arts. For more MLA help, use the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (2009), 7th ed., or visit Writing Services.

Each time you cite a source, include a…

1) parenthetical reference
2) works cited entry

Step 1: Parenthetical References
Place a parenthetical reference at the end of each sentence that contains a borrowed concept or data that is not common knowledge. Cite both quotations and paraphrases.

*Formatting:* In parentheses, put the author’s last name and the page number(s) on which the cited information appears. The period goes after the parentheses.

Ex. Pirates’ lives typically ended within two or three years “and often ended ignominiously at the end of a rope” (Cawthorne 12).

If you include the author’s name in the body of the sentence, omit it from the parenthetical reference.

Ex. Nigel Cawthorne explains that pirates’ lives typically ended within two or three years “and often ended ignominiously at the end of a rope” (12).

Remember to cite borrowed information even when you don’t quote the source directly.

Ex. Pirates were often hung after just a few years of marauding at sea (Cawthorne 12).

*Sources without page numbers:* If the source doesn’t have page numbers, simply omit them.

*Webpages without authors.* If the source doesn’t list an author, use the webpage title in quotes instead. If the source lacks a webpage title, use the website title (italicized) instead.

Step 2: Works Cited Page (see example on reverse)
At the end of the paper, add a page entitled “Works Cited” where you list information about each source cited in your text.

*Formatting:* List entries alphabetically by author’s last name. Double-space each line. Place the first line of each entry flush with the left margin and indent subsequent lines. Italicize titles of major works, like books, websites, films, and journals. Put quotes around the titles of shorter works, like articles, webpages, and short poems.

*Missing information:* Some electronic sources may not list all the information a standard MLA citation asks for. If an author’s name isn’t listed, omit it and start the citation with the title of the work. To note other missing information, use the following abbreviations:

- No publisher listed: n.p.
- No publication date listed: n.d.
- No page numbers listed: n. pag.
Works Cited


