

# MLA Step by Step

The sections below provide a step-by-step look at documenting different types of sources. Pay special attention to punctuation because it varies by source. If a specific element is not provided by the source, skip it.

The list of works cited should include any quoted, summarized, or paraphrased sources. At times, you will have to adapt the guidelines. For the most part, the elements needed for a works cited entry will include:

1. The author(s), if available
2. The title
3. The title of the larger work in which the source is located (now called a container): a collection, journal, magazine, Web site, etc.
4. As many of the following items as are available for the source and the container:
  - a. Editor, translator, director, performer
  - b. Version
  - c. Volume and issue numbers
  - d. Publisher or sponsor
  - e. Date of publication
  - f. Location of the source: page numbers, URL, DOI, etc.

Not all sources will require every element. See specific models in *A Writer's Reference* for more details. Notice the numbers in parentheses and their accompanying examples on page 2 of this handout.

## 1. Author Information:

- Arrange sources alphabetically by last names or by the first word for titles for works with no authors (except for *a*, *an*, or *the*).
- Do not indent the first line of each works cited entry, but indent any additional lines one-half inch (hanging indent). This technique makes it easier for the reader to scan the list alphabetically. (14-21)
- For a single author, the author's name order is last name, first name. (1)
- For two authors, the first author's name order is last name, first name. The second author's name order is first name, last name. (2)
- For three or more authors, the first author's name order is last name, first name, followed by "et al." (3)
- If no author is supplied, the organization or company can be used as author (do the same for the in-text citation). (4)
- If the authors are editors/translators, use their names, adding "editors" or "translators" after the names. (5)

## 2. Title and Subtitle of the Work:

- Subtitles are preceded by a colon, capitalizing the first word after the colon, and italicizing the entire title. (1, 3-5)
- Capitalize all words except articles (*a*, *an*, *the*), prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, and *to* infinitives, unless the word is first or last in the title or subtitle. (1, 3-5)
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles and other short works, such as short stories, poems, magazine articles, journal articles, newspaper articles, songs, television episodes, a short work from a website, etc. (10-13)
- Italicize titles of books and other long works, such as journals, magazines, newspapers, plays, musicals, anthologies, albums, television show titles, an entire website, etc. (1-21)
- Use *The* for periodicals which include *The* in their titles: *The New York Times*; *The Economist*. (13, 20)
- An anthology is a collection of works on a common theme, often with different authors for the selections and usually with an editor for the entire volume. (8, 9)

## 3. Name of Editor, Compiler, or Translator and Edition:

- If the work includes an editor or translator, begin with the name of the author and put the editor's or translator's name after the title. (6, 15)
- If the work includes editors/translators and/or editions, in addition to the authors: Author's name (last, first). *Title in italics*. Translated/Edited by Name. 2nd/3rd etc. ed., Publication Name, Date. (7)

## 4. Publication Information:

- Use full publisher names, except for terms such as "Inc." and "Co." Keep terms such as "Books" and "Publisher" and "Press." For university publishers, continue to use *U* and *P* for "University" and "Press." (1-9)
- For a book, take the name of the publisher from the title page or the copyright page.
- For a website, the publisher can be found at the bottom of the page or on the "About" page.
- If a work has two or more publishers, separate the names with slashes.
- If the title of a website and the publisher are the same/similar, use the site's title but omit the publisher.

5. Dates:

- For a book, use the most recent year from the title or copyright pages. For a website, use the copyright date or the most recent update. Use the complete date listed in the source.
- Abbreviate all months, except May, June, and July, and display the complete date in inverted format: 15 Apr. 2016.
- For sources without dates, give the date of access at the end of the citation: Accessed 4 Apr. 2016. (21)

6. Page Numbers (included for books in the in-text citation only):

- For page numbers, precede them with “p.” for one page and “pp.” for more than one page. (9-13, 17-20)
- Do not use page numbers from a website printout, unless it is a .pdf file.
- If an article does not appear on consecutive pages (p. 45 then pp. 54-66), give the number of the first page followed by a plus sign: 45+.

7. URLs and DOIs (see examples 14-21 below):

- Include a permalink or a DOI (digital object identifier) if a source provides one. (19)
- If a source does not provide either, include a URL, omitting the “http://” protocol. (15-18)
- For a library’s subscription database (such as JSTOR), include only the basic URL for the database home page. (19)
- For open databases and archives (such as Google Books), give the complete source’s URL. (15)

**Printed Book and Anthology Examples:**

1. Bowker, Gordon. *James Joyce: A New Biography*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011.
2. Gourevitch, Philip, and Errol Morris. *Standard Operating Procedure*. Penguin Books, 2008.
3. Leech, Geoffrey, et al. *Change in Contemporary English: A Grammatical Study*. Cambridge UP, 2009.
4. Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2015: Events of 2014*. Seven Stories Press, 2015.
5. Horner, Avril, and Anne Rowe, editors, *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch*. Princeton UP, 2016.
6. Ullman, Regina. *The Country Road: Stories*. Translated by Kurt Beals, New Directions Publishing, 2015.
7. Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., U of Minnesota P, 2008.
8. Marcus, Ben, editor. *New American Stories*. Vintage Books, 2015.
9. Sayrafiezadeh, Said. “Paranoia.” *New American Stories*, edited by Ben Marcus, Vintage Books, 2015, pp. 3-29.

**Printed Magazine, Journal, and Newspaper Examples:** The following examples include (10) Monthly magazine, (11) Weekly magazine, (12) Journal article, (13) Newspaper article.

10. Bryan, Christy. “Ivory Worship.” *National Geographic*, Oct. 2012, pp. 28-61.
11. Vick, Karl. “The Stateless Statesman.” *Time*, 15 Oct. 2012, pp. 32-37.
12. Matchie, Thomas. “Law versus Love in *The Round House*.” *Midwest Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 4, Summer 2015, pp. 353-64.
13. Bray, Hiawatha. “As Toys Get Smarter, Privacy Issues Emerge.” *The Boston Globe*, 10 Dec. 2015, p. C1.

**Online Examples:** The following examples include (14) Short work or magazine article with author, (15) Book, (16) Book in database, (17) Magazine article in database, (18) Journal article, (19) Journal article in database, (20) Newspaper in database, (21) Undated website.

14. Leonard, Andrew. “The Surveillance State High School.” *Salon*, 27 Nov. 2012, [www.salon.com/2012/11/27/the\\_surveillance\\_state\\_high\\_school/](http://www.salon.com/2012/11/27/the_surveillance_state_high_school/).
15. Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Harvard UP, 2014. *Google Books*, [books.google.com/books?isbn=0674369556](http://books.google.com/books?isbn=0674369556).
16. Goldsmith, Oliver. *The Vicar of Wakefield: A Tale*. Philadelphia, 1801. *America’s Historical Imprints*, [infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/).
17. Rosenbaum, Ron. “The Last Renaissance Man.” *Smithsonian*, Nov. 2012, pp. 39-44. *OmniFile Full Text Select*, [web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/](http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/).
18. Cáceres, Sigfrido Burgos. “Towards Concert in Africa: Seeking Progress and Power through Cohesion and Unity.” *African Studies Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4, Fall 2011, pp. 59-73, [asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/Caceres-Vol12Is4.pdf](http://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/Caceres-Vol12Is4.pdf).
19. Maier, Jessica. “A ‘True Likeness’: The Renaissance City Portrait.” *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 3, Fall 2012, pp. 711-52. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1086/668300.
20. “The Road Toward Peace.” *The New York Times*, 15 Feb. 1945, p. 18. Editorial. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times*, [search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes](http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes).
21. “Chapter 2: What Can Be Patented?” *Lemelson-MIT*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [lemelson.mit.edu/resources/chapter-2-what-can-be-patented](http://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/chapter-2-what-can-be-patented). Accessed 4 Apr. 2016.