

MLA Style & Citations

MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities. It provides a uniform style for formatting text, parenthetical (or in-text) citations, and end-of-text citations (the bibliography or works cited list). The correct use of a citation style enhances your credibility, and it can help prevent the appearance or accusations of plagiarism.

Plagiarism: A Serious Offense

Uncredited work that is incorporated into your own writing is considered plagiarism. In the professional world, plagiarism results in loss of credibility and often compensation, including future opportunities. In a classroom setting, plagiarism results in a range of sanctions, from a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment to expulsion. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties are severe. MLA offers artists and authors a systematic style of reference, again giving credit where credit is due, to protect MLA users from accusations of plagiarism.

Ethical Citation

Ethical citation is the practice of making sure that when you use other people's work within your own work, you properly attribute credit. In order to ethically cite in MLA style, you must create a **parenthetical/in-text citation** and a **bibliography/works cited** list.

****You MUST include both parts in order to avoid plagiarizing.****

In-Text Citations – Appear in the body of the essay and link to the bibliography/works cited page at the end of your paper. The in-text citation is offset with parentheses, clearly calling attention to itself for the reader. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to the reader that information was incorporated from a separate source. It also provides the reader with information to then turn to the Bibliography/Works Cited section of your essay (at the end) where they can find the complete reference.

Example of in-text citation

He goes on to explain that it is *both the observed and the assumed consumption of this media, which continually reassures the reader that “the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life”* (Anderson 35). That is to say, the readers of the magazine are not drawn to it because it offers specific content, but rather because it is directed at a specific reader.

*NOTE: The italics are only included here for the purposes of this explanation. In an actual paper none of this text would require italics.

The italicized text is what is taken from an outside source and requires citation; (Anderson 35) is the citation. Here “Anderson” is the author's last name, and “35” is the page number where the quote is taken from. Additional information on who Anderson is and which text this is taken from will be listed on the Works Cited page.

Works Cited (or Bibliography) – An organized list of all the sources used in your paper with complete bibliographic information about each source that appears on a separate page at the end of your paper. It is important to remember that each type of source (i.e., journal article, book, website, etc.) requires different formatting guidelines, so please check and follow these carefully.

Example of Works Cited entry

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, 1983.

When do I Cite?

If someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge. For example, if you search online for MLA resources, and specifically MLA sample papers, you will find many similar discussions on MLA style. MLA is a style and cannot be copyrighted because it is a style, but the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* can be copyright protected. If you reference a specific page in that handbook, you need to indicate it. If you write about a general MLA style issue that is commonly covered or addressed in multiple sources, you do not. When in doubt, reference the specific resource you used to write your essay.

If you follow the MLA style, and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism.

Adapted from *Writing for Success* (2015) and *In Conversation* (2017)



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