

DOCUMENTING SOURCES AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Documentation is the formal acknowledgment of the sources in a research paper. This chapter explains and illustrates the documentation style recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA), the style used by students of literature. In general, you must document the following types of information:

- **All word-for-word quotations from a source.** Whenever you use a writer’s exact words, you must document them. Even if you quote only a word or two within a paraphrase or summary, you must document the quoted words separately, after the final quotation marks.

- **All ideas from a source (print or electronic) that you put into your own words.** Be sure to document all paraphrases or summaries of a source’s ideas, including the author’s judgments, conclusions, and debatable assertions.

- **All visuals—tables, charts, and photographs—from a source.** Because visuals are almost always someone’s original creation, they must be documented.

Certain items, however, do not require documentation: common knowledge (information most readers probably know), facts available from a variety of reference sources, familiar sayings and well-known quotations, and your own ideas.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s words or ideas as if they were your own. Most plagiarism is unintentional plagiarism—for example, inserting a passage from a downloaded document directly into your paper and forgetting to include quotation marks and documentation. However, there is a difference between an honest mistake and intentional plagiarism—for example, copying sentences from a journal article or submitting as your own an essay that someone else has written. The penalties for unintentional plagiarism may sometimes be severe, but intentional plagiarism is almost always dealt with harshly.

The best way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to start your research early, keep careful notes, make sure you distinguish between your words and ideas and those of your sources, and most importantly, to adhere to the following guidelines:
Document All Material That Requires Documentation

**Original:** In Oates's stories there are no safe relationships, but the most perilous of all possibilities is sex. Sex is always destructive. (Tierce, Mike, and John Michael Crafton. “Connie's Tambourine Man: A New Reading of Arnold Friend.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 22 (1985): 219–24.)

**Plagiarism:** In many of Oates’s stories, relationships, especially sexual relationships, are dangerous.

In the example above, the writer uses ideas from a source but does not include documentation. As a result, she gives readers the mistaken impression that the source’s ideas are actually her own.

**Correct:** Tierce and Crafton point out that in many of Oates’s stories, relationships, especially sexual relationships, are dangerous. (220).

Enclose Borrowed Words in Quotation Marks


**Plagiarism:** As Gilbert and Gubar point out, the narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is evidently suffering from postpartum psychosis (212).

Even though the writer documents the passage, he uses the source’s exact words without putting them in quotation marks.

**Correct:** As Gilbert and Gubar point out, the narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper” “is evidently suffering from postpartum psychosis” (212).

Do Not Imitate a Source’s Syntax and Phrasing

**Original:** Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*, though it has achieved a firmly established position in the canon of American plays, is often distorted, if not misunderstood, by readers, directors, and audiences. (King, Thomas. “Ironic and Distance in *The Glass Menagerie*.” *Educational Theatre Journal* 31 (1992): 123–34.)
Plagiarism: Although *The Glass Menagerie* has a well-established place in the American theater, it is often misinterpreted by those who read it, see it, and direct it (King 125).

Although the student does not use the exact words of the source, he closely follows the sentence structure of the original and simply substitutes synonyms for the writer’s key words. Remember, acceptable paraphrases and summaries do more than change words; they use original phrasing and syntax to convey the source’s meaning.

Correct: According to Thomas King, although *The Glass Menagerie* has become an American classic, it is still not fully appreciated (125).

Differentiate Your Words from Those of Your Source

Original: At some colleges and universities, traditional survey courses of world and English literature . . . have been scrapped or diluted . . . What replaces them is sometimes a mere option of electives, sometimes “multicultural” courses introducing material from Third World cultures and thinning out an already thin sampling of Western writings, and sometimes courses geared especially to issues of class, race, and gender. (Howe, Irving. “The Value of the Canon.” *The New Republic* 2 Feb. 1991: 40 – 47.)

Plagiarism: At many universities the Western literature survey courses have been edged out by courses that emphasize minority concerns. These courses are “thinning an already thin sampling of Western writings” in favor of courses geared especially to issues of “class, race, and gender” (Howe 40).

Because the student writer does not differentiate his ideas from those of his source, it appears that only the two quotations in the last sentence are borrowed when, in fact, the first sentence also owes a debt to the original. The student should have identified the boundaries of the borrowed material by introducing it with an identifying phrase and ending with documentation. (Note that a quotation always requires its own documentation.)

Correct: According to Irving Howe, at many universities the Western literature survey courses have been edged out by courses that emphasize minority concerns (41). These courses, says Howe, are “thinning an already thin sampling of Western writings” in favor of courses geared especially to issues of “class, race, and gender” (40).
Many instructors of English and other languages as well as instructors in other humanities disciplines require MLA-style documentation. MLA documentation has three parts: parenthetical references in the body of the paper (also known as in-text citations), a works-cited list, and content notes.

**Parenthetical References in the Text**

MLA documentation style uses parenthetical references within the text to refer to an alphabetical works-cited list at the end of the paper. A parenthetical reference should contain just enough information to guide readers to the appropriate entry on your works-cited list. A typical parenthetical reference consists of the author's last name and a page number.

Gwendolyn Brooks uses the sonnet form to create poems that have a wide social and aesthetic range (Williams 972).

If you mention the author's name or the title of the work in your paper, only a page reference is needed.

According to Gladys Margaret Williams in “Gwendolyn Brooks’s Way with the Sonnet,” Brooks combines a sensitivity to poetic forms with a depth of emotion appropriate for her subject matter (972–73).

Brooks knows not only Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, but also the full range of African-American poetry (Williams, “Brooks’s Way” 972).

If you use more than one source by the same author, include a shortened title in the parenthetical reference.

For Gary Smith, the identity of Brooks’s African-American women is inextricably linked with their sense of race and poverty:

For Brooks, unlike the Renaissance poets, the victimization of poor Black women becomes not simply a minor chord but a predominant theme of *A Street in Bronzeville*. Few, if any, of her female characters are able to free themselves from a web of poverty that threatens to strangle their lives. (980)
An entire work
When citing an entire work, state the name of the author in your paper instead of in a parenthetical reference.

August Wilson’s play *Fences* treats many themes frequently expressed in modern drama.

A work by two or three authors
Myths cut across boundaries and cultural spheres and reappear in strikingly similar forms from country to country (Feldman and Richardson 124).

The effect of a work of literature depends on the audience’s predispositions that derive from membership in various social groups (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 87).

A work by more than three authors
State the last name of the first author, and use the abbreviation *et al.* (Latin for “and others”) for the rest.

Hawthorne’s short stories frequently use a combination of allegorical and symbolic methods (Guerin et al. 91).

A work in an anthology
In his essay “Flat and Round Characters,” E. M. Forster distinguishes between one-dimensional characters and those that are well developed (Stevick 223–31).

Note that the parenthetical reference cites the anthology (edited by Stevick) that contains Forster’s essay; full information about the anthology appears in the list of works cited.

A work with volume and page numbers
Critics consider *The Zoo Story* to be one of Albee’s best plays (Eagleton 2: 17).

An indirect source
Use the abbreviation *qtd. in* (“quoted in”) to indicate that the quoted material was not taken from the original source.

Wagner observed that myth and history stood before him *“with opposing claims”* (qtd. in Winkler 10).

A play with numbered lines
The parenthetical reference should contain the act, scene, and line numbers (in arabic numerals), separated by periods. When included in parenthetical
references, titles of the books of the Bible and well-known literary works are often abbreviated — Gen. for Genesis and Ado for Much Ado about Nothing, for example.

“Give thy thoughts no tongue,” says Polonius, “Nor any unproportioned thought his act” (Ham. 1.3.64–65).

A poem
Use a slash (/) to separate lines of poetry run in with the text. (The slash is preceded and followed by one space.) The parenthetical reference should cite the lines quoted. Include the word line or lines for the first reference but just the numbers for subsequent references.

“I muse my life-long hate, and without flinch / I bear it nobly as I live my part,” says Claude McKay in his bitterly ironic poem “The White City” (lines 3–4).

An electronic source
If you are citing a source from the Internet or from an online subscription service, remember that these sources frequently do not contain page numbers. If the source uses paragraph, section, or screen numbers, use the abbreviation “par.” “sec.,” or the full word “screen.”

The earliest type of movie censoring came in the form of licensing fees, and in Deer River, Minnesota, “a licensing fee of $200 was deemed not excessive for a town of 1000” (Ernst, par. 20).

If the source has no page numbers or markers of any kind, cite the entire work. (When readers get to the works-cited list, they will be able to determine the nature of the source.)

In her article “Limited Horizons,” Lynne Cheney says that schools do best when students read literature not for what it tells them about the workplace, but for its insights into the human condition.

Because of its parody of communism, the film Antz is actually an adult film masquerading as a child’s tale (Clemin).

The List of Works Cited
Parenthetical references refer to a works-cited list that includes all the sources you refer to in your paper. Begin the works-cited list on a new page, continuing the page numbers of the paper. For example, if the text of the paper ends on page 6, the works-cited section will begin on page 7.
# Informal Documentation

Sometimes, when you are writing a paper that includes quotations from a single source that the entire class has read, or if all your sources are from your textbook, your instructor may give you permission to use informal documentation. Because both the instructor and the class are familiar with the sources, you supply the authors’ last names and page numbers in parentheses but do not include a works-cited list.

Center the title **Works Cited** one inch from the top of the page. Arrange entries alphabetically, according to the last name of each author. Use the first word of the title if the author is unknown (articles — *a, an, and the* — at the beginning of a title are not considered first words). Double-space the entire works-cited list between and within entries. Begin typing each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines five spaces (or one-half inch). Each works-cited entry has three divisions — **author, title, and publishing information** — separated by periods. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* shows a single space after all end punctuation.

Below is a directory of the sample entries that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DIRECTORY OF MLA WORKS-CITED LIST ENTRIES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print Sources: Entries for Books</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A book by a single author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A book by two or three authors</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A book by more than three authors</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Two or more works by the same author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. An edited book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A book with a volume number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A short story, poem, or play in a collection of the author’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A short story in an anthology</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. A poem in an anthology</td>
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<td>10. A play in an anthology</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. An article in an anthology</td>
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<td>12. More than one selection from the same anthology</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. A translation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Print Sources: Entries for Articles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. An article in a journal with continuous pagination throughout an annual volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. An article with separate pagination in each issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. An article in a magazine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. An article in a daily newspaper
18. An article in a reference book

Entries for Other Sources
19. A film, videocassette, DVD, or CD-ROM
20. An interview
21. A lecture or an address

Electronic Sources: Entries from Internet Sites
22. A scholarly project or information database on the Internet
23. A document within a scholarly project or information database on the Internet
24. A personal site on the Internet
25. A book on the Internet
26. An article in a scholarly journal on the Internet
27. An article in an encyclopedia on the Internet
28. An article in a newspaper on the Internet
29. An article in a magazine on the Internet
30. A painting or photograph on the Internet
31. An e-mail
32. An online posting

Electronic Sources: Entries from Subscription Services
33. A scholarly journal article with separate pagination in each issue from an online service
34. A scholarly journal article with continuous pagination throughout an annual volume from an online service
35. A monthly magazine article from an online service
36. A newspaper article from an online service
37. A reference book article from an online service
38. A dictionary definition from an online service

Entries for Other Electronic Sources
39. A nonperiodical publication on DVD or CD-ROM
40. A periodical publication on DVD or CD-ROM

MLA • Print Sources:
Entries for Articles

Book citations include the author’s name; book title (underlined); and publication information (place, publisher, date). Capitalize all major words in the title except articles, prepositions, and the to of an infinitive (unless it is the first or last word of the title or subtitle). MLA requires that you abbreviate publishers’ names — for example, Basic for Basic Books and Oxford UP for Oxford University Press.
1. A book by a single author

2. A book by two or three authors

Notice that only the first author’s name is in reverse order.

3. A book by more than three authors

Note that instead of using *et al.*, you may list all the authors’ names in the order in which they appear on the title page.

4. Two or more works by the same author
List two or more works by the same author in alphabetical order by title. Include the author’s full name in the first entry; use three unspaced hyphens followed by a period to take the place of the author’s name in second and subsequent entries.

---. “Themes in Rudolfo Anaya’s Work.” Address given at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces. 11 Apr. 1987.

5. An edited book

Note that here the abbreviation *ed.* stands for *editor.*

6. A book with a volume number
When all the volumes of a multivolume work have the same title, list the number of the volume you used.


When each volume of a multivolume work has a separate title, list the title of the volume you used.

The Age of Napoleon is volume 2 of The Story of Civilization. You need not provide information about the work as a whole.

7. A short story, poem, or play in a collection of the author's work

8. A short story in an anthology

Note that here the abbreviation Ed. stands for Edited by. The inclusive page numbers follow the year of publication.

9. A poem in an anthology

10. A play in an anthology

11. An article in an anthology

12. More than one selection from the same anthology
If you are using more than one selection from an anthology, cite the anthology in a separate entry. Then, list each individual selection separately, including the author and title of the selection, the anthology editor's last name, and the inclusive page numbers.

Baxter, Charles. “Gryphon.” Kirszner and Mandell 000-00.

13. A translation
MLA • Print Sources:
Entries for Articles

Article citations include the author's name; the title of the article (in quotation marks); the name of the periodical (underlined); the month (abbreviated, except for May, June, and July) and the year; and the pages on which the full article appears (without the abbreviations p. or pp.).

14. An article in a journal with continuous pagination throughout an annual volume

15. An article with separate pagination in each issue

Note that 20.3 signifies volume 20, issue 3.

16. An article in a magazine

An article with no listed author is entered by title on the works-cited list.


Note that 34+ indicates that the article appears on pages that are not consecutive; in this case, the article begins on page 34 and continues on page 37.

17. An article in a daily newspaper
Omit the article the from the title of a newspaper even if the newspaper's actual title includes the article.


Note that C1+ indicates that the article begins on page 1 of Section C and continues on a subsequent page.

18. An article in a reference book
Do not include publication information for well-known reference books.

Include publication information when citing reference books that are not well known.


Entries for Other Sources

19. A film, videocassette, DVD, or CD-ROM


20. An interview


21. A lecture or an address


MLA • Electronic Sources: Entries from Internet Sites

MLA style recognizes that relevant publication information is not always available for electronic sources. Include in your citation whatever information you can reasonably obtain: the title of the Internet site (underlined); the editor of the site (if available); the version number of the source (if applicable); the date of electronic publication (or update); the number of pages, paragraphs, or sections (if available); the name of any sponsoring institution; the date of access; and the URL (within angle brackets). If you have to carry the URL over to the next line, divide it after a slash. If the URL is excessively long, use just the URL of the site’s search page, or use the URL of the site’s home page, followed by the word path and a colon and then the sequence of links to follow.

22. A scholarly project or information database on the Internet


23. A document within a scholarly project or information database on the Internet

24. A personal site on the Internet

25. A book on the Internet

26. An article in a scholarly journal on the Internet

When you cite information from the print version of an electronic source, include the publication information for the printed source, the number of pages or paragraphs (if available), and the date of access.

27. An article in an encyclopedia on the Internet

28. An article in a newspaper on the Internet

29. An article in a magazine on the Internet

30. A painting or photograph on the Internet

31. An email
Adkins, Camille. Email to the author. 28 June 2005.

32. An online posting
Online subscription services can be divided into those you subscribe to, such as America Online, and those that your college library subscribes to, such as Expanded Academic ASAP, LexisNexis, and ProQuest.

To cite information from an online service (such as AOL) to which you subscribe, you have two options. If the service provides a URL, follow the examples in entries 22 through 30. If the service enables you to use a keyword to access material, provide the keyword (following the date of access) at the end of the entry.


If, instead of a keyword, you follow a series of topic labels, list them (separated by semicolons) after the word Path.


To cite information from an online service to which your library subscribes, supply the publication information (including page numbers, if available) followed by the underlined name of the database (if known), the name of the service, the library at which you accessed the database, the date of access, and the URL of the online service’s home page.


33. A scholarly journal article with separate pagination in each issue from an online service


34. A scholarly journal article with continuous pagination throughout an annual volume from an online service

35. A monthly magazine article from an online service

36. A newspaper article from an online service

37. A reference book article from an online service

38. A dictionary definition from an online service

Entries for Other Electronic Sources

39. A nonperiodical publication on DVD or CD-ROM

40. A periodical publication on DVD or CD-ROM

WARNING: Using information from an Internet source can be risky. Contributors are not necessarily experts, and they frequently are inaccurate or misinformed. Unless you can be certain that the information you are obtaining from these sources is reliable, do not use it. You can check the reliability of an Internet source by asking your instructor or librarian for guidance.
Content Notes

Use content notes, indicated by a superscript (a raised number) in the text, to cite several sources at once or to provide commentary or explanations that do not fit smoothly into your paper. The full text of these notes appears on the first numbered page following the last page of the paper. (If your paper has no content notes, the works-cited page follows the last page of the paper.) Like works-cited entries, content notes are double-spaced within and between entries. However, the first line of each explanatory note is indented five spaces (or one-half inch), and subsequent lines are flush with the left-hand margin.

To Cite Several Sources

In the paper

Surprising as it may seem, there have been many attempts to define literature.¹

In the note

¹For an overview of critical opinion, see Arnold 72; Eagleton 1–2; Howe 43–44; and Abrams 232–34.

To Provide Explanations

In the paper

In recent years, gothic novels have achieved great popularity.³

In the note

³Gothic novels, works written in imitation of medieval romances, originally relied on supernatural occurrences. They flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.