

cite website mla tutorial

cite website mla tutorial is essential knowledge for any student or researcher aiming for academic integrity and clarity in their work. Understanding how to properly cite online sources according to the Modern Language Association (MLA) format is crucial for avoiding plagiarism and giving credit to the original creators of information. This comprehensive guide will walk you through the intricacies of citing websites in MLA, covering everything from basic citation elements to specific scenarios. We will explore the core components of an MLA website citation, delve into common challenges like missing information, and provide clear examples for various types of online content. Whether you're citing a blog post, an online article, or a government website, this MLA website citation tutorial will equip you with the skills to format your citations accurately and efficiently.

Table of Contents

Understanding the Core MLA Website Citation Elements
Crafting Your MLA Website Citation: Step-by-Step
Handling Missing Information in MLA Website Citations
Citing Specific Types of Online Content
In-Text Citations for Websites in MLA Format
Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Citing Websites in MLA

Understanding the Core MLA Website Citation Elements

At its heart, citing a website in MLA format involves providing your readers with enough information to locate the source themselves. This requires identifying and assembling several key pieces of data from the webpage you are referencing. The MLA style, particularly in its ninth edition, emphasizes accessibility and comprehensiveness. Therefore, the goal is to be as specific as possible while still adhering to the established format. The elements are typically presented in a particular order, but flexibility is allowed based on the information available on the source page.

The primary goal of any citation is to allow a reader to find the original source. When citing a website, this means capturing identifying details that distinguish it from countless other online resources. Think of it as providing a detailed address for information. Each element plays a vital role in this process, contributing to the overall clarity and credibility of your research. Failing to include even one crucial element can sometimes make a source difficult, if not impossible, to find, which undermines the very purpose of citation.

Crafting Your MLA Website Citation: Step-by-Step

Creating an MLA citation for a website involves a methodical approach, ensuring all necessary components are included in the correct order. The MLA Handbook outlines a container system, where the website itself is considered a larger container for the specific article or page you are citing. This concept helps organize the information logically. While the exact order can vary slightly depending on the type of source, the general structure remains consistent. Let's break down the essential steps to construct a robust MLA website citation.

Author or Creator

The first element to identify is the author or creator of the content. This could be an individual's name or the name of an organization. If a personal name is provided, list it as Last Name, First Name. For an organization, use its full, official name. If no author is clearly identified, you will move to the next element and begin your citation with the title of the work. This is a common scenario with many online articles or news pieces. It's always best to look for an author or authoring body to provide more attribution.

Title of the Source

Next, you will cite the specific title of the page or article you are referencing. This should be enclosed in quotation marks. For example, if you are citing a specific blog post, the title of that post goes here. If you are citing an entire website as a whole, the website's title would be italicized rather than put in quotation marks, but for individual pages, quotation marks are the standard. Ensure the title is accurately transcribed from the webpage.

Title of Container

The "container" in this context is the larger website that houses your specific source. This could be the name of a newspaper's website, a journal's website, or a corporate website. The title of the container is italicized. For instance, if you found an article on The New York Times website, "The New York Times" would be your container title. This helps distinguish the specific article from the publication it belongs to.

Other Contributors

This element includes information about anyone else who significantly contributed to the work, such as editors or translators, if applicable. This

is less common for basic website citations but important to note for more complex sources. If there are editors, you would list them preceded by "edited by."

Version

This refers to any specific version or edition of the work. For websites, this is rarely applicable unless you are citing a specific archived version or a particular iteration of a digital publication. Generally, this element is omitted for standard web pages.

Number

This element is typically used for numbering in series, like volumes and issue numbers for academic journals. For most general website citations, you will not need to include a "Number" element. Stick to the information that is readily available and relevant to locating the source.

Publisher

The publisher is the entity responsible for making the website available. This is often the organization that owns or operates the website. For example, if you are citing a page on the NASA website, "NASA" would be the publisher. However, if the author and publisher are the same, you can omit the publisher to avoid redundancy.

Date of Publication

This is the date when the content was published or last updated. MLA prefers the day, month, and year format. For example, 15 Nov. 2023. If only a year is available, you can use just the year. If no date is present, you will move on to the next element and note its absence later.

Location

The location is how readers will access the source. For websites, this is the Uniform Resource Locator (URL). MLA generally asks for the full URL, but you can omit "http://" or "https://://" For example, www.example.com/article.html. If the URL is very long and complex, you might use a shortened version if it clearly identifies the page.

Date of Access

While no longer mandatory in MLA 9th edition for all sources, including the date you accessed the website can be helpful, especially for sources that are likely to change frequently. It is usually formatted as Day Month Year (e.g., 15 Nov. 2023). Consult your instructor's guidelines as some may still prefer or require this.

Handling Missing Information in MLA Website Citations

It is common to encounter websites where not all the standard citation elements are readily available. The MLA style guide provides clear instructions on how to proceed when information is missing, ensuring your citations remain functional and understandable. The key is to adapt without sacrificing the integrity of your citation. You simply omit the missing element and move on to the next one in the standard sequence.

This adaptability is a core strength of the MLA format. Rather than leaving a citation incomplete or making assumptions, you acknowledge what is present and what is not. For instance, if a website article lacks an author, you begin with the title of the article. If there's no publication date, you note that and move to the URL. The goal is always to provide the most complete citation possible with the information at hand, making the source discoverable for your reader.

No Author Listed

If a website article or page does not have a clearly identified author (either an individual or an organization), you simply begin your citation with the title of the source (the article or page title, in quotation marks). Following this, you would proceed with the title of the container (the website's name, italicized), and so on. This is a straightforward adaptation that ensures your citation still functions correctly.

No Publication Date

When a publication date is not available for a website source, you omit it from the citation. You would then proceed to the URL. In some cases, if a website indicates that content is "ongoing" or lacks any temporal marker, you simply move past the date element. If you are unsure whether a date is truly missing or just difficult to find, it's worth a thorough search of the page, including footer information or "about us" sections.

No Publisher Listed

If the publisher of the website is not explicitly stated or cannot be easily determined, you can omit this element. Sometimes, the author or the name of the website itself might serve as both the authoring entity and the publisher, in which case you might have already included it. When it's genuinely absent, just skip it and continue with the next available piece of information, typically the publication date.

No Title for the Page

While rare, if a webpage lacks a discernible title, you would use a brief descriptive phrase in place of the title, enclosed in quotation marks. For example, if you were citing a contact form page with no title, you might use "Contact Us Form." This descriptive element helps readers understand what the source is about, even without a formal title. However, most web pages will have some form of title or heading that can be used.

Citing Specific Types of Online Content

The MLA format is designed to be versatile, accommodating a wide range of online content. While the core principles remain the same, certain types of web content may require slight adjustments or specific considerations to ensure accuracy and clarity in your citations.

Citing a Web Page or Online Article

This is the most common scenario. The basic format is: Author (if available). "Title of Source." Title of Container (Website Name), Publisher (if different from website name), Date of Publication, URL. Date of Access (optional).

Example:

- Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Title of Website, Publisher, Day Month Year Published, URL. Accessed Day Month Year.

Citing a Blog Post

Blog posts are cited similarly to web pages. The author, title of the post (in quotation marks), the name of the blog (*italicized*), the date of publication, and the URL are key. If the blog has a clear publisher, include that as well. Remember that blog posts are often informal, but proper citation is still required.

Example:

- Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Blog Post." Name of Blog, Day Month Year Published, URL.

Citing an Online Newspaper or Magazine Article

When citing an article from an online newspaper or magazine, include the author, article title in quotation marks, the newspaper/magazine title in italics, the publisher (if applicable and distinct from the newspaper/magazine name), the date of publication, and the URL. If the article is behind a paywall, you can note that if instructed by your instructor, but generally, the direct URL is sufficient.

Example:

- Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Name of Newspaper/Magazine, Day Month Year Published, URL.

Citing a Government Website

Government websites often have clear organizational authors. In such cases, the name of the government agency or department serves as the author. Follow this with the title of the specific document or page, then the name of the overarching government website (e.g., USA.gov), the publication date, and the URL. Ensure you use the full name of the agency.

Example:

- Name of Government Agency. "Title of Report or Page." Name of Government Website, Publisher (if applicable), Day Month Year Published, URL.

Citing Social Media Posts

Citing social media requires careful attention to detail. Include the author (username), the exact text of the post (in quotation marks, truncated if very long), the name of the social media platform (*italicized*), the date of posting, and the URL. Note that the platform name is often treated as the container.

Example:

- Username. "First 20 words of post..." Name of Platform, Day Month Year Posted, URL.

In-Text Citations for Websites in MLA Format

In addition to the Works Cited page entry, MLA requires in-text citations to direct readers to the specific source being referenced within the body of your paper. For website citations, this usually involves the author's last name and, if available, the page number. However, web pages rarely have page numbers in the traditional sense.

The primary goal of an in-text citation is to provide a brief pointer to the full citation in your Works Cited list. This allows your reader to quickly identify where a piece of information originated without disrupting the flow of your writing. When citing online sources, you need to be mindful of how MLA handles the absence of page numbers.

Citing with an Author and No Page Numbers

If the author is clearly identified and the source has no page numbers (which is common for websites), the in-text citation typically consists solely of the author's last name in parentheses. For example: (Smith). This assumes you have already mentioned the author's name in your sentence; if so, no parenthetical citation is needed.

Citing with No Author

When no author is listed for the website source, you use a shortened version of the source's title in the parenthetical citation. The title should be enclosed in quotation marks if it's an article or page, or italicized if it refers to the entire website. For example: ("Understanding MLA"). Ensure the shortened title matches the beginning of the entry on your Works Cited page.

Citing with Author and Section or Paragraph Number

Some digital publications may include section or paragraph numbers. If these are present and clearly marked, you can include them in your in-text citation. For example, if a source has a paragraph number, you might cite it as: (Smith par. 5) or (Smith ¶ 5). Always check your instructor's preferences for this type of citation.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Citing Websites in MLA

Navigating the nuances of MLA website citations can sometimes lead to errors. Being aware of common pitfalls can help you produce accurate and polished citations. These mistakes often stem from misinterpreting the MLA guidelines

or overlooking key details on the source page.

Avoiding these common errors will not only ensure your citations are correctly formatted but also demonstrate a higher level of attention to detail in your academic work. Precision in citation reflects positively on the rigor of your research and your commitment to academic integrity.

- Omitting quotation marks around article titles or italicizing website titles incorrectly.
- Forgetting to include the publisher or mistaking it for the author.
- Using incomplete URLs or removing necessary parts of the URL.
- Incorrectly formatting dates, especially the month abbreviations.
- Failing to cite sources that are not your own original thoughts or research.
- Not using a shortened title for the in-text citation when no author is listed.
- Confusing the title of the source with the title of the container.

Redundancy with Author and Publisher

A common mistake is to list both the author and the publisher when they are the same entity, for example, a government agency publishing its own report on its own website. MLA guidelines state that if the author and publisher are the same, you omit the publisher to avoid redundancy. Always double-check this to streamline your citations.

URL Formatting and Stability

While MLA generally requires the full URL, it's acceptable to omit "http://" or "https://:/" More importantly, ensure the URL is stable and leads directly to the content. If a link is broken or leads to a generic homepage, it's not helpful. Consider if a more permanent link or DOI (Digital Object Identifier) is available, though DOIs are more common in humanities than general web sources.

Date Formatting Errors

MLA uses a specific format for dates: Day Month Year (e.g., 15 Nov. 2023).

Months are abbreviated (except May, June, and July) and followed by a period. Incorrectly formatted dates are a frequent oversight that can be easily corrected with careful attention.

In-Text Citation Mismatches

Ensure that your in-text citations directly correspond to the entries on your Works Cited page. If your in-text citation uses a shortened title because there was no author, the corresponding Works Cited entry must begin with that same shortened title. Any mismatch can confuse your reader and potentially lead to a deduction in your grade.

Relying on Only the Basic Format

The MLA handbook is comprehensive. While the basic format covers many situations, it's crucial to consult it or reliable academic resources for more complex sources like videos, podcasts, or interviews found online. Assuming a single format applies to all web content can lead to inaccuracies.

Importance of the Works Cited Page

Finally, remember that the Works Cited page is an integral part of your citation process. Every source mentioned in your in-text citations must have a corresponding entry on the Works Cited page, and vice-versa. This page provides a complete list of all sources consulted and cited in your work, enabling readers to explore your research further.

Q: What is the most important element of an MLA website citation?

A: The most important element of an MLA website citation is providing enough information for your reader to locate the original source. This typically includes the author, title of the source, title of the container (the website), and a stable URL.

Q: How do I cite a website if there is no author listed?

A: If no author is listed for a website, you begin your citation with the title of the source (the article or page title in quotation marks) and then proceed with the title of the container (the website name, italicized).

Q: Should I include the full URL in my MLA website citation?

A: Yes, you should include the full URL for your MLA website citation. However, you can omit the "http://" or "https://://" prefix. Ensure the URL is current and leads directly to the source.

Q: Do I need to include the date I accessed the website in MLA format?

A: According to MLA 9th edition guidelines, the date of access is no longer mandatory for all sources. However, it can be helpful for sources that are likely to change frequently, and some instructors may still require it. Always check your specific assignment guidelines.

Q: How do I cite a blog post in MLA?

A: To cite a blog post in MLA, you typically include the author's name, the title of the blog post in quotation marks, the name of the blog in italics, the date of publication, and the URL.

Q: What is the difference between the "Title of Source" and "Title of Container" for websites?

A: The "Title of Source" refers to the specific article, page, or post you are citing. The "Title of Container" refers to the larger website that houses that source, such as the name of a newspaper's website or a journal's website.

Q: How do I handle a website that has been updated multiple times?

A: If a website has been updated, cite the most recent publication or update date. If the update date is not clearly indicated, and no original publication date is available, you may use the date you accessed the source, or omit the date and rely on the URL and title for identification.

Q: Are there specific rules for citing a government website in MLA?

A: When citing a government website, the name of the government agency or department often serves as the author. Follow this with the title of the specific document or page, the name of the overarching government website, the publication date, and the URL.

Q: What should I do if the website has a copyright date but no specific publication date for the article?

A: If an article has a copyright date for the website but no specific publication date for the article itself, you can use the copyright year if it's the only temporal information available. If there is no date, omit it and proceed to the URL.

Q: How do I make sure my in-text citations match my Works Cited entries?

A: Ensure that the author's last name or the shortened title used in your in-text citation exactly matches the first element of the corresponding entry on your Works Cited page. This consistency is crucial for clarity and proper referencing.

[Cite Website Mla Tutorial](#)

Cite Website Mla Tutorial

Related Articles

- [chromatography for drug safety explained](#)
- [circle of fifths quiz](#)
- [chronic disease management glycemic load calculation](#)

[Back to Home](#)