

citing sources mla 9th edition

The Art of Citing Sources MLA 9th Edition: A Comprehensive Guide

citing sources mla 9th edition is a fundamental skill for academic integrity and scholarly communication, ensuring that original ideas are properly attributed and that readers can locate the information used. This guide provides a detailed exploration of the MLA 9th Edition's principles and practices, covering everything from understanding the core components of a citation to navigating the complexities of various source types. We will delve into the rationale behind MLA formatting, the essential elements required for both in-text citations and the Works Cited page, and offer practical advice for accurately citing common and less common sources. Mastering these citation techniques is crucial for avoiding plagiarism and enhancing the credibility of your research papers, essays, and any academic writing.

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Understanding the MLA 9th Edition

The Modern Language Association (MLA) style is widely used in the humanities, particularly in English, literature, and cultural studies. The 9th edition, published in April 2021, builds upon previous editions while streamlining certain aspects and adapting to the ever-evolving digital landscape of information. Its primary goal is to provide a consistent and clear system for acknowledging the sources that inform academic work, thereby respecting intellectual property and allowing readers to trace the origins of ideas and evidence.

MLA 9th Edition emphasizes a "container" system for citations, recognizing that many sources are now part of larger wholes (like an article within a journal, or a chapter within a book). This approach helps scholars navigate the complex ways information is published and accessed in the digital age. The emphasis remains on providing the necessary information for a reader to locate the original source, regardless of its format or origin. Understanding this core philosophy is key to applying the guidelines effectively.

The Core Components of MLA Citations

At the heart of MLA 9th Edition citation are several core components that should be included

whenever possible. These elements, when presented in a specific order and format, provide all the necessary information for identification and retrieval. While not every source will have every element, knowing what to look for is the first step to accurate citing. These components form the building blocks of both in-text citations and the Works Cited page entries.

Key Elements for Citation

The MLA 9th Edition outlines the following core elements that should be included in citations:

- **Author:** The person or group responsible for creating the work.
- **Title of Source:** The specific title of the work being cited (e.g., an article title, a chapter title).
- **Title of Container:** The larger work that the source is part of (e.g., a journal title, a book title, a website title).
- **Other Contributors:** Individuals who contributed to the work but are not the primary author (e.g., editors, translators, illustrators).
- **Version:** Specific editions or versions of a work (e.g., 3rd edition, director's cut).
- **Number:** Volume and issue numbers for periodicals, or specific numbers for other sequenced items.
- **Publisher:** The entity responsible for making the work available (e.g., Penguin Books, university press).
- **Publication Date:** The year (or full date) the work was published.
- **Location:** Page numbers, URL, DOI, or other locational information.

The Container System Explained

The "container" system is a significant aspect of MLA 9th Edition. It recognizes that many sources exist within larger works. For instance, an article is contained within a journal, which is contained within a library database or a website. A chapter is contained within a book. This concept helps organize citations for various media, providing a hierarchical structure. For example, when citing a journal article, the article title is the "Title of Source," and the journal title is the "Title of Container."

In-Text Citations in MLA 9th Edition

In-text citations are brief references within the body of your paper that direct readers to the full

citation on your Works Cited page. They typically consist of the author's last name and the page number(s) where the information can be found. The goal is to interrupt your text as little as possible while still providing clear attribution.

Basic Parenthetical Citation

The most common form of in-text citation is the parenthetical citation, which places the author's last name and the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence or clause containing the borrowed information. For example: (Smith 45).

If the author's name is mentioned in the text itself, only the page number is needed in the parentheses. For instance: As Smith argues, the implications are far-reaching (45).

Citing Sources with No Author

When a source lacks an author, you should use a shortened version of the title in your in-text citation. If the title begins with an article (A, An, The), omit it. For example, if the title is "The History of Rome," the in-text citation would be ("History" 12).

Citing Multiple Authors

For works by two authors, include both last names connected by an ampersand: (Johnson & Miller 78). For works by three or more authors, use the first author's last name followed by "et al.": (Davis et al. 112).

Citing Indirect Sources

If you are quoting from a source that is cited within another source (an indirect source), and you only have access to the secondary source, you should indicate this in your citation. This is done by mentioning the original author and using the abbreviation "qtd. in" (quoted in) followed by the author and page number of the source you consulted. For example: (Smith qtd. in Jones 67).

Crafting Your Works Cited Page

The Works Cited page is an alphabetical list of all the sources you have cited in your paper. It appears at the end of your document and provides complete bibliographic information for each entry, allowing your readers to find the original sources. Each entry on the Works Cited page should correspond to an in-text citation in your paper.

Formatting the Works Cited Page

The Works Cited page should be titled "Works Cited" (centered, not underlined or bolded). The entries are alphabetized by the first word of each citation (usually the author's last name or, if there is no author, the title). All entries are double-spaced, and the second and subsequent lines of each entry are indented by half an inch (hanging indent).

MLA 9th Edition Entry Structure

Each entry on the Works Cited page is constructed using the core MLA elements. While the order and punctuation may vary slightly depending on the source type, the fundamental components remain consistent. The general structure aims to provide clarity and accessibility for the reader. Understanding this structure is paramount for constructing accurate citations.

Citing Common Source Types

MLA 9th Edition provides specific guidelines for a wide array of source types, from traditional print materials to contemporary digital resources. Familiarizing yourself with the formats for the most common sources you encounter will significantly streamline your citation process.

Books

For a book with one author, the citation typically includes: Author's last name, First name. Title of Book. Publisher, Publication date.

Example: Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Penguin Classics, 2002.

For an edited book, you would include the editor(s) after the title: Author's last name, First name. Title of Book. Edited by Editor's First name Last name, Publisher, Publication date.

Journal Articles

For a journal article found in print, the citation usually includes: Author's last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal, vol. , no. , Publication date, pp. page numbers.

Example: Smith, John. "The Evolution of Citation Styles." *Academic Writing Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2020, pp. 115-130.

Websites

Citing websites can be complex due to their varying structures. A general format includes: Author's last name, First name (if known). "Title of Page." Title of Website, Publisher (if different from website name), Date of publication or last update, URL or DOI. Accessed Date (optional but recommended).

Example: Green, Emily. "Understanding MLA Formatting." Writing Center Hub, University of Excellence, 15 Aug. 2023, www.writingcenterhub.com/mla-guide. Accessed 20 Oct. 2023.

Citing Digital and Multimedia Sources

The digital age presents unique challenges and opportunities for citation. MLA 9th Edition has adapted to include guidelines for a wide range of digital and multimedia formats, ensuring that even ephemeral online content can be properly acknowledged.

Online Databases

When citing an article from an online database (like JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCO), you treat it similarly to a print journal article but include the database name and DOI or stable URL. The core elements are Author's last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal, vol. , no. , Publication date, pp. page numbers. Name of Database, DOI or Stable URL.

Example: Chen, Li. "Digital Humanities and Literary Analysis." Journal of Digital Studies, vol. 10, no. 1, 2018, pp. 45-62. JSTOR, doi:10.1080/XXXXXX.

Videos and Recordings

For citing videos (like those on YouTube or Vimeo) or other recordings, you'll typically include: Creator's last name, First name (or organization). "Title of Video/Recording." Title of Website/Platform, Publisher (if applicable), Date of publication, URL.

Example: CrashCourse. "MLA 9th Edition Explained." YouTube, CrashCourse, 10 Sep. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABCDEFGH.

Social Media

Citing social media posts requires careful consideration of the platform and the nature of the content. A general approach includes: Author's last name, First name (or username). "Text of Post." Platform Name, Day Month Year of post, URL.

Example: @AcademicTips. "Remember to double-check your page numbers! MLA9 Citations." Twitter, 18 Oct. 2023, twitter.com/AcademicTips/status/XXXXXXX.

Advanced Citation Scenarios

Beyond the most common source types, researchers often encounter materials that require more nuanced citation. MLA 9th Edition offers guidance for these less frequent but equally important scenarios, ensuring comprehensive academic practice.

Citing Works in Anthologies or Collections

When citing a chapter or essay from a collection of works, you cite the specific piece, not the entire book. The format includes: Author's last name, First name. "Title of Essay/Chapter." Title of Anthology/Collection, edited by Editor's First name Last name, Publisher, Publication date, pp. page numbers of the essay/chapter.

Example: Davis, Robert. "The Impact of Digitalization." Essays on Modern Literature, edited by Sarah Miller, University Press, 2019, pp. 75-98.

Citing Government Documents

Government documents are cited by the agency or author, followed by the title, publication information, and any relevant identifiers. For example: United States. Department of Commerce. National Trade Data Bank. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2022.

Citing Performances or Lectures

For a live performance or a lecture, you would generally include: Creator's last name, First name. "Title of Work/Lecture." Type of event, Location, Date.

Example: Garcia, Maria. "Keynote Address on Artificial Intelligence." Annual Conference on Technology, Grand Hotel, 15 Oct. 2023.

Tips for Accurate MLA 9th Edition Citing

Achieving accuracy in MLA 9th Edition citing is an ongoing process that benefits from consistent habits and a proactive approach. Paying attention to detail and utilizing available resources can prevent common errors and enhance the professionalism of your work.

Stay Organized from the Start

Begin keeping track of your sources as soon as you start your research. Use a citation management

tool or a simple document to record all necessary bibliographic information for each source. This proactive approach prevents last-minute scrambling and potential omissions.

Consult the Official Guide

The most authoritative resource for MLA 9th Edition is *MLA Handbook*, 9th edition. Familiarize yourself with its guidelines, especially for less common source types. Many universities also provide helpful online guides that adhere to the official standards.

Pay Attention to Punctuation and Formatting

MLA citations rely heavily on specific punctuation (commas, periods, quotation marks) and formatting (italics for titles of larger works, quotation marks for titles of shorter works). Small errors in these details can affect clarity and adherence to the style guide.

Review and Proofread

Thoroughly review your in-text citations and your Works Cited page before submitting your paper. Cross-reference entries to ensure every in-text citation has a corresponding entry and vice versa. Proofread for typos, consistent formatting, and correct alphabetization.

When in Doubt, Err on the Side of More Information

If you are unsure whether to include a particular piece of information in a citation, it is generally better to include it if it helps the reader locate the source. The MLA system prioritizes providing sufficient detail for retrieval.

FAQ

Q: What is the most significant change in MLA 9th Edition compared to MLA 8th Edition?

A: The most significant change in MLA 9th Edition is the refinement of the core elements approach, emphasizing the "container" system and making it more flexible for citing a wider range of sources, especially digital ones. It also streamlines some punctuation and spacing guidelines.

Q: How do I cite a source with no page numbers, like a

website?

A: For sources without page numbers, you omit the page number from the in-text citation. If there is an author, you would cite (Author's Last Name). If there is no author, you would use a shortened version of the title in quotation marks, for example, ("Title of Source").

Q: Do I need to include the date I accessed a website in my Works Cited entry?

A: MLA 9th Edition makes the access date optional but still recommends including it, especially for online sources that may change or disappear. It can be included at the end of the citation, preceded by "Accessed."

Q: How should I format citations for social media posts?

A: For social media posts, you typically include the author's name (or username), the text of the post in quotation marks, the platform name in italics, the date of the post, and the URL. For example: @Username. "Text of Post." Platform Name, Day Month Year, URL.

Q: What is the purpose of the "container" system in MLA 9th Edition?

A: The "container" system is designed to help scholars cite sources that are part of larger wholes. It recognizes that many works are embedded within other works, such as an article within a journal, or a chapter within a book. This system provides a framework for organizing the various layers of a source.

Q: How do I cite an article from a newspaper or magazine according to MLA 9th Edition?

A: For newspaper or magazine articles, you typically cite: Author's last name, First name. "Title of Article." Title of Newspaper/Magazine, Day Month Year, pp. page numbers. If citing online, you would include the URL or DOI.

Q: What should I do if a source has multiple authors?

A: For works with two authors, list both last names connected by "and" in the Works Cited entry (e.g., Smith and Jones). In-text, you would cite (Smith and Jones). For three or more authors, list the first author's last name followed by "et al." in both the Works Cited entry and the in-text citation.

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