

# MLA Documentation

The Modern Language Association (MLA) publishes a style guide primarily used by students and professionals in the liberal arts and humanities. This handout covers some of the essentials on how to use MLA 8th Edition to format a research paper, including page layout, in-text citations and the works-cited list.

## Formatting a Paper

When it's finally time to draft your paper, it can be tempting to start by playing with the page layout and formatting until it's *just* right. However, by doing this, you'll likely end up spending more time and effort on both the writing of the paper and the formatting of it.

So feel free to draft your paper with any font size, line spacing, or header system that makes your drafting process productive and efficient. Once you're done, you can go back and put everything in its right place. Below are a few starting points for MLA guidelines.

Include a header with your last name and the page number in the top right corner of every page, 0.5 inches from the top edge of the paper. Don't include "page" or "p." or any punctuation.

At the top left corner of your first page and on separate lines, list your name, your professor's name, the name of your class, and the date the paper is due.

Do not include a title page. Center your title one line below the date and one line above the body of the paper. Do not add extra space.

Use 1-inch margins.

Double space your document throughout the paper, including between paragraphs.

Use Times New Roman 12-point font throughout the paper, including the header.

The diagram shows a page layout with the following elements:

- Header:** Dewyer 1
- Metadata:** Reginald Dewyer, Dr. Jaime Carson, American Lit. Since 1789, 8 April 2017
- Title:** Pragmatic Notions of Truth in John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*
- Text:** In his own words, *East of Eden* was John Steinbeck's "big book" (Steinbeck, Journal 33). Considering all of his previous work as "an exercise, as practice for the one to come," he named *East of Eden* "the one to come" (Steinbeck, Journal 8). Transparently influenced by the narrative of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, it is a novel of biblical proportion, embracing the epic and mythical nature of a biblical narrative and moving the reader to respond to the truth of the narrative. The name for *East of Eden*'s foundational truth is "timshel"—a Hebrew word found in God's last words to Cain, alternatively translated in a hinge section of the novel as "thou mayest" (Steinbeck, *East of Eden* 303).
- Text:** This central, humanistic thrust of the novel is most fully understood within the pragmatic renderings of truth and belief— notions that the novel's main characters come to powerfully embody. Indeed, the novel's empowering, alternative interpretation of "timshel" is so useful in the characters' struggle to live that the verity of the translation is affirmed

## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is taking an idea from another author and rewording it—this usually means condensing the author’s argument. Paraphrasing is often recommended over directly quoting because it demonstrates that you understand the content well enough to explain it to someone else in your own words.

*Paraphrases must be cited.*  
**If in doubt, cite it.** MLA requires that you use a page number, even when you aren’t directly quoting a source.

According to Frommer, Rome has a unique cultural heritage because of its centralized location (25).

or

Rome has a unique cultural heritage because of its centralized location (Frommer 25).

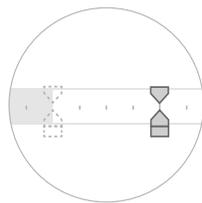
## Direct Quotations

Although paraphrasing is a smooth and fluid way to incorporate borrowed information, direct quotations can be useful if the author’s original words are just too good not to use. Here are a few quotation methods:

As Rajagopalan asserts, “A working command of the language is often stipulated as a prerequisite for most white collar jobs (and some blue collar ones as well)” (94).

or

In South America on the whole, a “working command” of English is commonly mentioned as “a prerequisite for most white collar jobs (and some blue collar ones as well)” (Rajagopalan 94).



If a quotation is **more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse**, begin the quotation on a new line 0.5” (one tab) from the margin. Keep the entire quotation aligned (unless you need to indicate a paragraph break), and place the period before the citation. You do not need quotation marks; setting the text apart tells your reader it is a quote.

This is called a **block quote**.



Faced with the fragile implications of English’s unprecedented power as the dominant lingua franca of the globalized world, Friedrich concludes:

With the growing concern for issues regarding the linguistic imperialism in the 1990’s, a central question both in the literature and for instructors had become whether or not to teach English. This in my view is not the question at all. Rather it is how to do it so as to empower students. (74)

Indeed, if English will continue to dominate the global linguistic arena, the option is not between teaching it and not teaching it. The choice is about how to teach it responsibly, and in a way that affirms the validity of Expanding and Outer Circle varieties in order to empower

# In-text Citations

In-text citation information can be listed either in the signal phrase or in the parentheses at the end of the sentence. Typically, the punctuation goes after the parentheses, except in the cases of block quotes and punctuation that affects the meaning of the quote. Include exclamation points and question marks in addition to the punctuation after the citation: "APU rocks!" (Wallace 2).

**1 author** According to Von Klosst-Donna, David Foster Wallace was a brilliant man with long hair who sometimes wore a headband (27).

**2 authors** Williams and Van Pelt reported that the tigers could never quite get along (112).

**3 or more authors** Seven adult female lions could never be wrong; of course they had to eat the water buffalo (Jackson et al. 29).

Name only the **first author**. Add "**et al.**" to signify the others.

**corporate author** A 2015 report by Elevated Productions predicted an increase in lightning for 2016 (6).

**secondary source** Seiden writes, "The squirrel study remained inconclusive" (qtd. in Colt 98).

On the **reference page**, you will cite *Colt*, not *Seiden*.

**website** President Obama appeared in Los Angeles last week to deliver a speech to students at USC (Potter).

**personal communication** (letters, emails, phone conversations, etc.) In an interview with the former VP of the company, Von Klosst-Donna reflected: "The business was failing. I didn't know what to do. So, I scrapped my plans; I sold the jelly, got rid of the toast, and started paying my employees for getting eight hours of sleep" (14 July 2016).

Cite interviews and personal communication, such as emails or letters, **by last name** in the same way you would any other source.

**the Bible** "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (English Standard Version, Rom. 12.2).

Include the **translation** only the **first time** you cite it. For more information, see our "Citing the Bible" handout.

If an author does not exist, use a **shortened form of the title** of the work instead of an author's name. Place the title in quotation marks if it is a short work, such as a poem, short story, or article. Italicize if it is a longer work, such as a play, book, or entire website.

According to some, natural phenomena are contributing to the slow erosion of certain works of ancient Roman architecture: "Roman monuments appear to be slowly sinking into the earth, a phenomenon which may be expounded by frequent earthquakes in the region" ("A Brief Overview of Antiquities" 8). Though earthquakes cannot be blamed as the only culprit, they

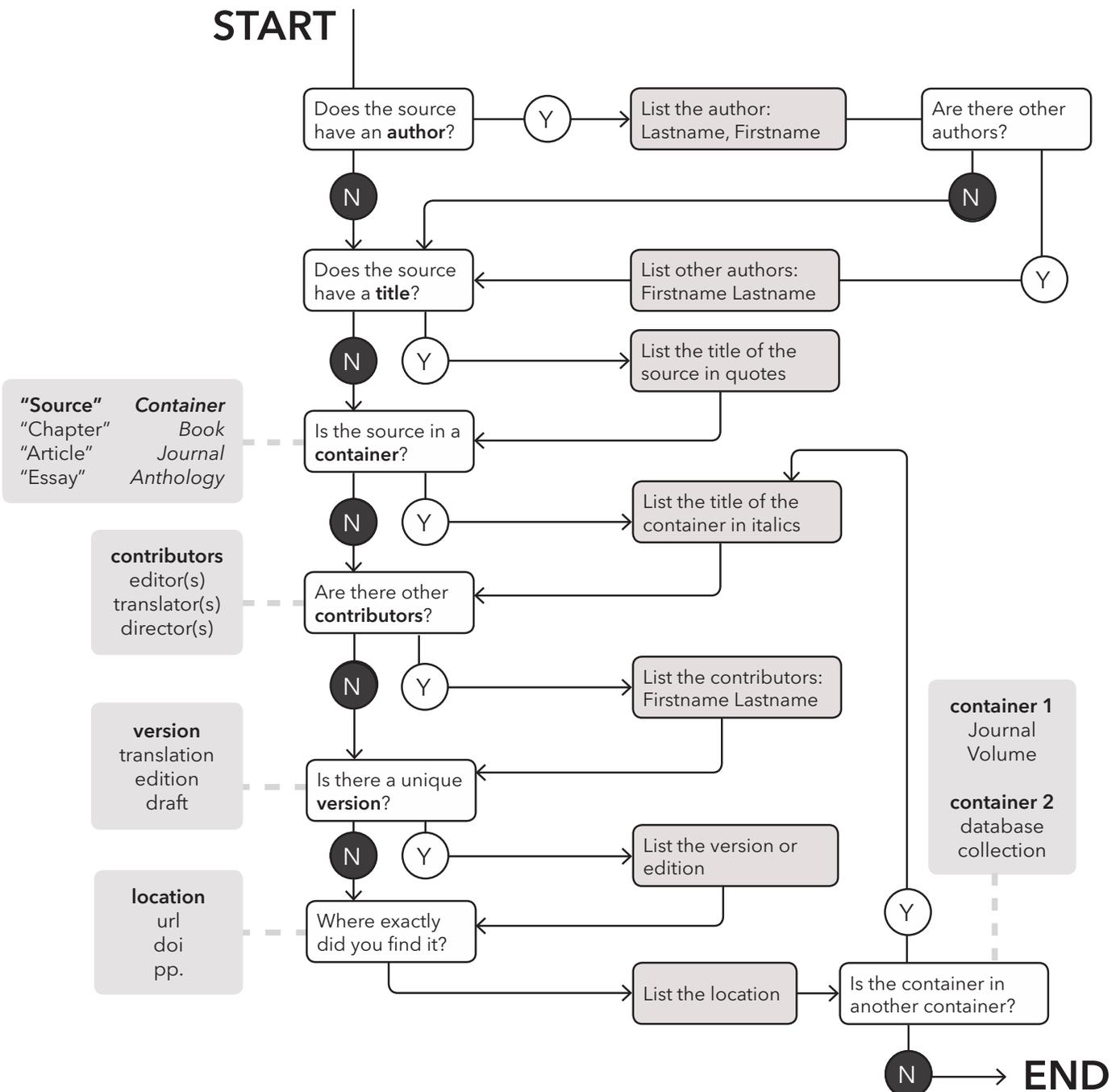
# Works Cited in MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition: What's Changed?

The eighth edition of the MLA Handbook introduces a **new model** for entries in the Works Cited list. In the new model, the work's publication format is not considered. Instead of asking, "How do I cite a book [or DVD or web page]?" the writer creates an entry by consulting the MLA's list of **core elements**—facts common to most works—which are **assembled in a specific order**.

In the new model, the writer asks, "Who is the author? What is the title?" and so forth—**regardless of the nature of the source**. Because of this fundamental change, the entries produced by the new approach have changed. Here are some examples and steps to get you started.

Author(s) .  
 Title of source .  
 Title of container ,  
 Other contributors ,  
 Version ,  
 Number ,  
 Publisher ,  
 Publication date ,  
 Location .

**core elements**



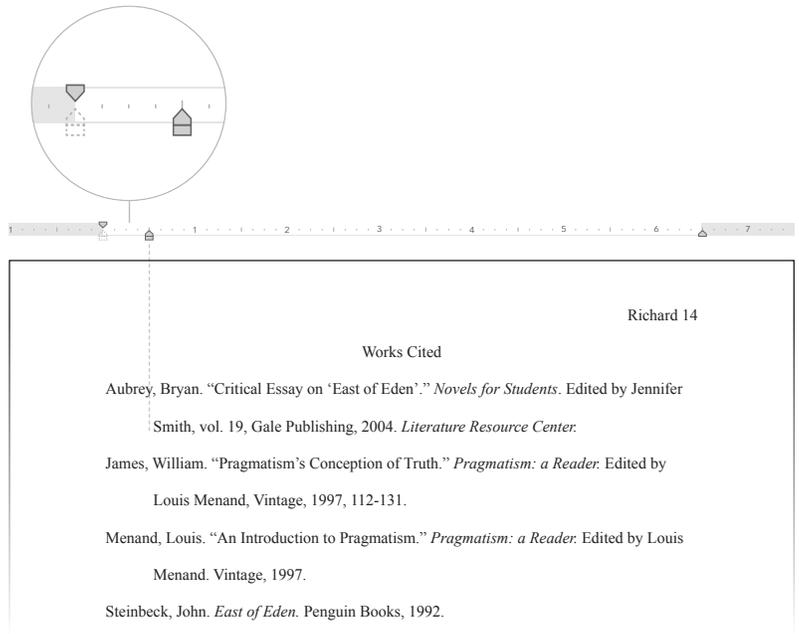
## Works Cited Page\*

The first line of each citation is not indented. If the citation exceeds one line, tab every subsequent line over by 0.5 inches by adjusting the **hanging indent** slider on the ruler at the top of your word processor.

Include "Works Cited" at the top of the page and centered.

**Every source cited** in your paper (except for personal communications and sacred texts such as the Bible) **must have a listing** on the works cited page with as much bibliographical information as is available to you.

Citations should be alphabetized by author or by title if no author is available.



**Basic format** Lastname, Firstname and Firstname Lastname.  
 Title of source. Title of container 1, Other contributors, Version or Edition, Volume and Issue Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.  
 Title of container 2, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

These are all the **possible** elements. Include the info you have and **omit what you don't**.

examples

**Source with one author** Reno, Russell R. *Redemptive Change: Atonement and the Christian Cure of the Soul*. Trinity P, 2002.

**Source with multiple authors** Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Gouvis. *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*. HarperCollins, 2007.

List the authors as: Last, First, First Last, and First Last. (Only the **first name** is reversed.)

Shepherd, Jack, et al. *The Day We Went Hiking*. Ohio State UP, 1974.

If there are **three or more authors**, you may name only the first and add "**et al.**" to signify the others.

**Source published by a corporation/agency** American Medical Association. *The American Medical Association Encyclopedia of Medicine*. Random Publications, 1989.

**Work in an anthology** Hamilton, Victor P. "The Ethics of the Old Testament." *Christian Ethics: An Inquiry into Christian Ethics from a Biblical Theological Perspective*. Edited by Leon O. Hynson and Lane A. Scott. Anderson, Warner Press, 1983, pp. 9-30.

\*Looking for info on how to **format** the information on your Works Cited page? See the example at the top of this section.

**Source as part of a larger collection** Dewar, James A., and Peng Hwa Ang. "The Cultural Consequences of Printing and the Internet." *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Einstein*, edited by Sabrina Alcorn Baron et al., U of Massachusetts P / Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 2007, pp. 365-77.

When the source is part of a container, (e.g., an article in a journal), the source title is in quotes and the **container title** is in **italics**.

Here, the article is part of a journal, so the article (the **title**) is set in quotation marks, and the journal (i.e., the **container**) is in italics.

**Article in a reference book** "Transfiguration." *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. 2nd ed., 2001.

Thomas, R. M. "Religious Education." *The International Encyclopedia of Education*. Edited by Torsten Husén and T. Neville Postlethwaite, 2nd ed., Elsevier Science, 1994.

**Journal article** Moreland, J.P. "Intelligent Design Psychology and Evolutionary Psychology: A Comparison of Rival Paradigms." *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2001, pp. 361-77.

Here, 29 is the **volume** number, 4 is the **issue**, 2001 is the **date of publication**, and 361-77 is the **page range**.

**Government publication** California Dept. of Justice. *California Attorney General's Women's Rights Handbook*. Office of the Attorney General, 1990.

**Magazine article** Jeschke, Marlin. "Fixing Church Discipline: What Corrective Love Really Looks Like in the Body of Christ." *Christianity Today*, Aug. 2005, pp. 30-32.

**Website** Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*, 25 Apr. 2013, somanybooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-digital-and-print/.

For a **website**, the **date** refers to when the site was **accessed**.

**Unpublished works (such as dissertations and theses)** McVay, Lori Ann. "Women as Relational Leaders: Nature or Nurture?" MA thesis. Azusa Pacific U, 2006.

**The Bible** *The Bible*. Authorized King James Version, Oxford UP, 1998.

**Personal communication** Teller, Mary. Personal Interview. 8 Nov. 2012.

Teller, Mary. "Re: Roman Cathedrals." Message to the author. 8 Nov. 2012.

Teller, Mary. Letter to the author. 8 Nov. 2012.