

The Exciting World of Citation

MLA FORMAT

MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (MLA)

There are 2 documentation styles used in academics: APA format and MLA format. The following subject areas use MLA format:

- the arts (art, drama, music)
- English
- languages
- history

Requirements for MLA Format

Every time a person does research, they must include TWO things:

- 1) An indication of which ideas in the written work were borrowed from someone else (often called embedded citations), AND
- 2) A full citation list of where to find the work where the idea was borrowed (often called a Works Cited list).

You'll notice that I underlined the word *idea* above. That is because you must acknowledge what information presented in your work is in fact borrowed, even if you change the words (also known as paraphrasing).

Direct Quote vs. Paraphrasing

Direct Quote

- When you include sentences or phrases that are copied exactly as they are written or said from your source
- Quotation marks around the copied phrase or sentence(s) are required

Paraphrasing

- When you summarize the borrowed ideas in your own words
- Quotation marks are not required

NOTE: See the class website for a link that explains when it is best to directly quote and when it is best to paraphrase. In general, you will want to paraphrase shorter works of writing, as in the case with letters and diary entries.

Back to the Two Requirements for MLA Format:

#1: Acknowledging Borrowed Work in Your Written Work

Technically speaking, you must communicate to the reader (your audience: me) which sentences contain an idea that is borrowed from research that you have conducted. You must do this by providing what is called:

- parenthetical citations
- in-text citations
- embedded citations

Those are just three names that all describe the same thing. I will be using “embedded citations” from here on out.

You must provide an embedded citation within the text of your work (letter, diary, news article, research essay) at the end of a direct quote, paraphrased sentence, image, or statistic. The embedded citation communicates to your audience that the information in that sentence is borrowed and not an original idea from you. Any assignment requiring research will have several embedded citations.

So, what does an embedded citation look like?

An embedded citation includes the authors' names and page numbers in parentheses (also sometimes called "brackets") at the end of a sentence before the period. For example, if you borrowed something that Ms. Gourley wrote, you would paraphrase it and include the embedded citation at the end of the sentence like this:

Canada's involvement in The Great War resulted in the formation of Canadian identity (Gourley 72).

You will notice that there is no punctuation within the embedded citation (i.e., no comma after my last name) and no words or symbols to indicate "page" --- you simply write the page number in the parentheses after the author's last name. You will also note that the period is at the end of the second/closing parenthesis.

Embedded Citations for Websites

You will likely be looking at websites which means there won't be page numbers. For websites, you will only have to include the author(s). Since different sources have different characteristics, use this as a general guide:

How do I create an embedded citation that is from an Internet site and therefore, has no page number?

(Gourley).

How do I create an embedded citation that is from an Internet site and has no author because the site was created by an organization?

(Kids Help Phone).

How do I create an embedded citation that is from an Internet site and has no author because the site was created by the government?

(Statistics Canada).

Will I have an embedded citation at the end of every sentence in my assignment? That depends...

- If it takes you 2 or 3 sentences to express ONE IDEA, you can include the embedded citation at the end of the second or third sentence.
- If you write a sentence that contains common knowledge, you do not need to provide an embedded citation. How do you know what is common knowledge? As yourself if someone living in Chad, Greenland, Turkmenistan, and Sri Lanka would all know the idea you are expressing to be fact. If your answer is “yes”, you don’t need to provide an embedded citation.
- Common knowledge cannot just be what you and your friends or people in North America believe to be true.

Even after reading the above, when in doubt:

- Give an embedded citation. Cover yourself. It’s better to over-cite than to under-cite which is quite simply plagiarism. That’s just an ugly word for intellectual theft which I’ll get into later.
- Ask your teacher. It’s kind of what they do for a living. They’re there to help you!

Am I done yet?

No.

We have only covered embedded citations which is one of the two requirements of MLA format. Next slide...

Back to the Two Requirements for MLA Format: #2: Providing a List of All Sources

There are 3 different lists that can be required by a teacher. For your assignments in history, and according to MLA format, you will provide a “Works Cited” list. This is a list of full citations for all the sources that you cite in embedded citations throughout your report.

Features of a Works Cited List

- It is a list that must be on a separate page from the written assignment.
- When submitting your assignment, the Works Cited list is stapled/attached to the back of the assignment.
- The title at the top of the page should simply read, Works Cited.
- The second and third lines of each citation should be indented.
- The list should NEVER contain bullets or numbers. The order of the sources is by alphabetical order by the first letter of each citation, whether or not there is an author or only the name of an organization.

So, what does a works cited list look like?

Works Cited

- Ali, Mohammad. "Float Like a Butterfly. Sting Like a Bee." *The World According to Mohammad Ali*, 15 March 2016. Web. www.m.ali.com. Accessed 20 October 2016.
- Coopersmith, Sarah. "Why My Dad has a Better Vertical than You." *Being a Coopersmith*, 17 June 2015. Web. www.s.coopersmith.com. Accessed 25 October 2016.
- "Diary of 2nd Lieutenant Bernard James Glynn." *Veterans Affairs Canada*. Canada.ca, 23 Oct. 2014. Web. 5 Nov 2014. www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/diaries-letters-stories/first-worldwar/glynn
Accessed April 20, 2017
- Fisher-Quann, Rayne. "Can We Talk?" *101 Very Good Arguments for Abolishing a Dress Code*, 1 June 2016. Web. 7 August 2016. www.r.fisher-quann.com.
- Reid, Jason. "An Alien Keeps Stealing All My Forms. Seriously." *Why I Can't Hand in Forms and Other Stories*, 5 September 2016. Web. www.j.reid.com. Accessed 6 November 2016.

How to Construct a Works Cited List

Technically speaking, for each citation, you need the following information in the order it's presented here:

- author's surname, comma, given name, period. If none, leave blank.
- "web page name in quotation marks"
- *title of the website in italics*
- version numbers, posting date, or last revision date
- "Web"
- URL
- the date you accessed the website

Notice the indentation in the example and that it is alphabetized by the first letter of each citation. If there is no author, you use the first letter of the article name to alphabetize.

Works Cited Construction

There are many websites that will help you create the citations.

- Google Docs (maybe Michael Done can talk to me about this one...)
- Easy Bib
- Bibme.com

There are several sites online to help you generate citations.

If you want to consult a website for specific details about how to create embedded citations and a works cited list, go to Owl Purdue.