

How do I know what is needed for an MLA citation?

The *MLA Handbook* says that all sources can be cited using what it calls “core elements,” which are defined as general bits of information common to all sources. Using the core elements to form citations is meant to streamline the process, as writers can use the same template to cite any source they decide to use. Please note that not every source has all of these elements, and writers only need to include what is applicable.

A note on containers: One core element that needs explaining is the container. A container is a collection that holds smaller works (e.g., an academic journal or news website). It is possible for a source to have more than one container. For instance, a journal (container 1), might also be housed in a database (container 2). Works that stand alone and are not part of a greater whole are considered self-contained (e.g., a print novel).

Below are how the core elements should be arranged in a citation:

Container One:

1. Author (last name, first name).
 2. Title of source.
 3. Title of container (e.g. website title, journal title, etc.),
 4. Other contributors (e.g. editors, translators, and narrators),
 5. Version (or edition),
 6. Number,
 7. Publisher,
 8. Publication date,
 9. Location (e.g. page numbers for printed sources, URLs for online sources, place for physical objects like artwork)
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Container Two (if applicable):

10. Title of second container (e.g.: database, digital library, streaming service, etc.)
11. Contributor (e.g.: editors, directors, curators, etc.)
12. Version (or edition)
13. Publisher
14. Publication Date
15. Location (e.g. page numbers for printed sources, URLs for online sources, place of physical objects like artwork).

Example 1 (book):

Author's last name, Author's first name. *Title in Italics*. Version, publisher, publication date, location (if necessary), page numbers.

Smith, John. *Travels in the New World*. 13th ed., Notarealpublisher, 1952, pp. 56-67.

Example 2 (website):

Author/compiler/editor. "Title." *Website Title*, publisher or sponsor, publication date.

Everdeen, Katniss. "Making Your First Bow." *Mockingjay Marksmanship*, District Twelve Wildlife Fish & Games, 21 Dec. 1013, www.mockingjaymarksmanship.com/making-your-first-bow.

Example 3 (journal article from a database):

Author's last name, Author's first name. Title in quotation marks. Title of journal in italics, other contributors such as editors or translators, volume number, issue number, publisher, publication date, page numbers. *Database Name*. URL or DOI

Scott, Jeremy. "How Times Have Changed Since 2002." *Journal of Time*, edited by Dwight McKenzie, vol. 3, no. 7, Time Association, 2015, pp. 45-49. *JSTOR*, <https://www.doi.org/notareallink>

What gets abbreviated?

It is recommended that common terms that are not necessary to spell out in the works cited list be abbreviated in citations. Below are the terms that are recommended to be abbreviated and their abbreviations:

ch.	chapter
dept.	department
ed.	edition
e.g.	for example
et al.	and others
etc.	and so forth
i.e.	that is

no.	number
P	Press (used in documentation in names of academic presses: “MIT P”)
p., pp.	page, pages
par.	Paragraph
qtd. In	quoted in
rev.	revised
sec.	section
trans.	Translation
U	University (used in documentation: “U of Texas, Austin”)
UP	University Press
vol.	volume

What if my source has no author?

If the source’s author is unavailable, begin with the source’s title. (**NOTE:** In this case, your in-text citation includes the source title). e.g. an online dictionary definition:

“writing.” *WLC Dictionary*, 2016, www.wlcdictionary.com/notarealdictionary/writing

What gets italicized?

Titles of full publications get italicized. Books, magazines, newspapers, journals, movies, TV shows, plays, websites, and albums are all full publications.

The Hobbit, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times*, *NCIS*, *Our Town*, *CNN.com*.

What gets put in quotes?

Titles of shorter pieces (typically parts of larger publications) get put inside quotes. Short stories, magazine articles, newspaper articles, journal articles, web pages that are part of a larger site, and songs are all put inside quotes rather than italicized.

“Christopher the Fisherman,” “Man Bites Dog,” “Top 10 Cars of 2014,” “Strawberry Fields.”

What gets italicized AND put in quotes?

1. The title of a shorter piece that is part of the title of a larger publication (such as including the title of a poem or song in the title of a book)

Interpretations of “Amazing Grace”

2. The title of a larger publication that is part of the title of a shorter piece (such as including the title of a book in the title of your paper)

“Comparing Athos, Porthos, and Aramis to the Holy Trinity in *The Three Musketeers*”

Where can I find all that information in a book?

Publication information such as the publisher and copyright date can usually be found on the inside cover of a book, or at the bottom of a webpage.

How do I cite a source with multiple authors?

If you are using a source with only two authors, you will list both authors in the citation; the first author will be listed last name then first name and the second author will be listed first name then last name. If you are using a source with three or more authors, you will list the first author followed by “et al.”