

THE WRITING CENTER

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Call ahead for an appointment with a student Writing Consultant or a professional Writing Specialist.
Drop-ins also welcome and accommodated whenever possible.

Guidelines for Using MLA Style

MLA stands for Modern Language Association and refers to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. MLA style is the format used to document outside sources used in papers written for courses in the humanities. The 2009 *Handbook* (7th edition) is available on the Writing Center's reference shelves and in the reference section of the library.

Why should you cite your sources? 1) It is the right thing to do. Using another writer's words or ideas without citing the source is plagiarism. 2) Citations allow readers to look up your sources. This helps put your ideas and conclusions into context. 3) For school and professional papers, citations are required.

MLA style provides standardized guidelines for citing sources within the body of your paper and at the end of your paper in a Works Cited list.

An important MLA guideline is the way to format the title of a particular source both within the paper and in the Works Cited list:

- All book titles should be *italicized*.
- All journal or magazine names should be *italicized*.
- All names of radio, theater, or television programs should be *italicized*.
- All chapter titles or works within an edited book should be "in quotes".
- All journal or magazine article titles should be "in quotes".

In-Text Citations

MLA format uses parenthetical documentation. This means that the necessary documentation information goes between parentheses at the end of a sentence or passage. Provide parenthetical references for direct quotations and paraphrases. Be sure to document all ideas, insights, and information that you draw from sources, even if you put them into your own words.

When a citation is not needed: Common sense and ethics should determine your need for documenting sources. You do not need to give sources for familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge.

What goes in the parentheses? Author and page number: (Seinfeld 65). The period (or closing punctuation) follows the parenthesis. If you mention the author's name in your text, you only need to put the page number in parentheses. **Example:** George Costanza claims in his essay "On the Orange Sublime" that "pulp can move" (60).

Example of a direct quotation: Newman often tries to undermine Jerry Seinfeld. In fact, "his relationships with all of the characters exhibit the moral weaknesses of his character" (Costanza 61).

Example of a paraphrase: Newman's characterization is created through malicious acts against Jerry Seinfeld. Indeed, he exhibits the moral qualities we often associate with the pit viper (Costanza 62).

PRINT SOURCES

Known author(s): For print sources like books, magazines, scholarly journal articles, and newspapers, provide the author's name and a page number. *Example:* (Benis 63) or (Seinfeld, Benis and Kramer 65)

No author or editor: Use a shortened title of the work. *Example:* ("The Early Days of" 64).

Four or more authors or editors: Use the first author's name and follow with et al. (meaning "and others"). *Example:* (Seinfeld et al. 66).

More than one work by the same author: Give author, title, and page number. *Example:* College students watch an average of nine hours of television per week (Kramer, "TV Junkies" 67). Recent studies show, however, that the average may be significantly higher (Kramer, *Global Vision* 68).

NON-PRINT SOURCES

For parenthetical citations of electronic and Internet sources, follow the following guidelines:

- Put in the parentheses the first item that appears in the Works Cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name, film name).
- You do not need to give paragraph numbers or page numbers.
- If you use the name of the website in the text, you do not need to write out the full URL.

Example: As a writer on *About.com* explains, *Seinfeld* was about "the lives of four narcissistic, neurotic New Yorkers unable to form lasting relationships or ever be happy" (Bell).

Works Cited Lists

As you do your research, you should be keeping a running list of the sources (and pages within those sources) that you are consulting and may be referring to or quoting from in the body of your paper. This is similar to a bibliography. Eventually, you will convert this bibliography into a Works Cited list, including only those sources that you did in fact cite in your paper (unless your instructor asks for a list of all sources consulted).

Some things to know about Works Cited lists:

- Start on a new page and title it "Works Cited." This page and each subsequent page should be numbered, continuing the numbering of the text. Page numbers appear in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Continue the list on as many pages as necessary.
- Works Cited lists should be alphabetical by author's last name. If two or more entries citing coauthors begin with the same name, alphabetize by the last names of the second authors listed. If two or more sources are by the same author(s), alphabetize by the title of the work.
- Double space between the title and the first entry.
- Double space the entire list.
- Begin each entry flush with the left margin; if an entry runs more than one line, indent the subsequent line or lines five spaces (i.e. a hanging indentation). This technique highlights the names by which the list has been alphabetized.
- For well-known cities like New York, Chicago, etc., you do not need to include the state.
- All in-text citations must correspond to full bibliographic references on the Works Cited page(s).

BOOKS

Book with two or three authors:

Seinfeld, Jerry, George Costanza, and Elaine Benis. *What Is THAT About?* Richmond, VA: Nothing Publishers, 1997.

Book with four or more authors and an edition other than the first:

Kramer, Cosmo et al. *Friends and Other Enemies: How to Survive as a Social Being*. 2nd ed. New York: Benis Press, 1998.

Book with an editor:

Peterman, Jay, ed. *Fashions from the Field*. New York: Benis Press, 1996. (Note: “eds.” for “editors.”)

Book with an author and an editor:

Kramer, Cosmo et al. *Friends and Enemies*. Ed. Elaine Benis. New York: Benis Press, 1998. (Note: For more than one editor use “Ed.” also as it stands for “edited by.”)

Work in an edited anthology or collection:

Kramer, Cosmo. “The Junior Mint.” *The Newman Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Tim Whatley. Boston: Greenway Press, 1998. 221-224.

PERIODICALS

(Note: A periodical is a publication that appears regularly at fixed intervals, such as a newspaper, a magazine, or a scholarly journal. Abbreviate the month, except for May, June, and July.)

Article in a journal:

Seinfeld, Jerry. “Why I Wrote a Show About Nothing.” *Journal of Television* 45 (1998): 22. Print.

Article in a weekly magazine:

Willis, Joseph. “Seinfeld’s Last Dance.” *Newsweek*. 13 Mar. 1998: 34-36. Print.

Article in a monthly magazine:

Lucas, John. “Seinfeld: The First Season.” *Atlantic Monthly* July 1990: 122-140. Print.

Article in a daily newspaper:

Chan, Chuck. “Seinfeld Around the Water Cooler.” *Boston Globe* 13 Oct. 1994: A1+. Print.

ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

Here are some common features you should try and find before citing electronic sources in MLA style. Not every Web page will provide all of the following information. However, collect as much of the following information as possible both for your citations and for your research notes:

- Author and/or editor names (if available)
- Article name in quotation marks (if applicable)
- Title of the Website, project, or book in italics.
- Any version numbers available, including revisions, posting dates, volumes, or issue numbers.
- Publisher information, including the publisher name and publishing date.
- Any page numbers (if available).

- Date you accessed the material. (It is necessary to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available on one date may no longer be available later.)

Entire website: Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). *Name of Site*. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

- Kramer, Cosmo. *Photos of Coffee Table Books*. NBC, 28 Nov. 1997. Web. 10 May 2009.

Page on a website with no date:

- "Seinfeld FAQ." *About.com*. n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

E-mail communication:

- Rutledge, Peter. "Re: Notes on Seinfeld." Message to author. 12 Mar. 2009. E-mail.

Online book:

- Holmes, Sarah. *Notes from the Underground: My Life as a Seinfeld Groupie*. Ed. Joe Strummer. Boston: Greenway Press, 1996. 13 April 2008. Web.

Article in an online-only scholarly journal: MLA requires a page range for articles that appear in scholarly journals. If the journal you are citing appears exclusively in an online format that does not make use of page numbers, use the abbreviation *n. pag.*

- Benis, Elaine. "The Culture of Boys." *Society: The Online-Only Journal* 6.2 (2008): n. pag. Web. 20 May 2009.

Article in an online scholarly journal that also appears in print: Cite articles in online scholarly journals that also appear in print as you would a scholarly journal in print, including the page range of the article. Provide the medium of publication that you used (in this case, *Web*) and the date of access.

- Seinfeld, Morty. "Beltless Raincoats." *Fashion Forward Journal* 6.6 (2000): 595-600. Web. 8 Feb. 2009.

Article from an online database: Cite articles from online databases (e.g. LexisNexis, PsychInfo) just as you would print sources. In addition to this information, provide the title of the database italicized, the medium of publication, and the date of access.

- Benis, Elaine. "Why Nothing?" *Science* 29 Apr. 1995: 64-8. *Science Online*. Web. 5 Mar. 2009.

Listserve, Discussion Group, or Blog Posting: Cite Web postings as you would a standard Web entry. Provide the author of the work, the title of the posting in quotation marks, the Web site name in italics, the publisher, and the posting date. Follow with the medium of publication and the date of access. Include screen names as author names when author name is not known. If both names are known, place the author's name in brackets. Remember if the publisher of the site is unknown, use the abbreviation *n.p.*

- Superman1 [Jerry Seinfeld]. "Re: Why I Ended the Show" MusingsByJerry. n.p. 9 Jan. 2008. Web. 5 Apr. 2009.

NONPRINT SOURCES

Interview you conducted: Benis, Elaine. Personal Interview. 19 May 2009.

Film: *Bee Movie*. Screenplay by Jerry Seinfeld et al. Dir. Steve Hickner and Simon J. Smith. Sony, 1999. DVD.

TV broadcast: "Kramer's Darkest Hour." *Dateline*. NBC. 6 October 2009. Television.

Visual art: Seinfeld, Jerry. *Superman Does Good*. 1998. Bryant Univ. Museum of Art, RI.

Lecture: Carter, Stephanie. "Using *Seinfeld* to Learn MLA Style." Bryant Univ. 24 Sept. 2009. Keynote address.

Significant Updates in the 7th Edition of the MLA Handbook

With the release of the 2009 *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th edition), writers must take note of several small but significant changes.

- **No More Underlining! Underlining is no more.** MLA now recommends italicizing titles of independently published works (books, periodicals, films, etc).
- **No More URLs!** While website entries will still include authors, article names, and website names, when available, MLA no longer requires URLs. Writers are, however, encouraged to provide a URL if the citation information does not lead readers to easily find the source.
- **Publication Medium.** Every entry receives a medium of publication marker. Most entries will be listed as Print or Web, but other possibilities include Performance, DVD, or TV. Most of these markers will appear at the end of entries; however, markers for Web sources are followed by the date of access.
- **Continuous Pagination? Who Cares?** You no longer have to worry about whether scholarly publications employ continuous pagination or not. For all such entries, both volume and issue numbers are required, regardless of pagination.
- **New Abbreviations.** Many web source entries now require a publisher name, a date of publication, and/or page numbers. When no publisher name appears on the website, write n.p. for no publisher given. When sites omit a date of publication, write n.d. for no date. For online journals that appear only online (no print version) or on databases that do not provide pagination, write n. pag. for no pagination.