Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Citation: A Brief Tutorial with Examples

Besides being part of the SBCC academic honesty policy (see College Procedures in the SBCC schedule of class, general catalogue, or on the SBCC website), there are several important reasons instructors require accurate citation of sources in research papers:

- If a reader of your essay or article wants to know more about your topic and found the quotes that you’ve included thought-provoking or pertinent to his or her own interests, accurate citation gives the reader a path back to that exact resource to which you referenced. Citing sources also lends credibility to your own work if you draw on valid, trusted sources like scholarly books, professional journals, and reputable websites (not Wikipedia!).

- Also, consider how inaccurate or missing citation can be an example of the childhood game of telephone: if a writer is incorrect or neglects to cite a source, the next writer who cites the first writer will unknowingly provide incomplete or misrepresented data to subsequent readers, possibly setting off a whole chain of misinformation.

- Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, each scholar, interviewee, webmaster, or instructor who has created original, information in any form – electronic, verbal, print, image – deserves to be recognized for their contribution to the scholarship of the subject, no matter how small that contribution might appear to you.

Consider the following when deciding to include a citation for information in your paper:

- **Citation is required if the information**: expresses an opinion; is original thinking; contains statistics, examples, charts, graphs, images, etc.; is a verbatim (word for word) quote from someone else or is primarily someone else’s words; is a lesser known fact about a largely recognized event or idea on which you build your own interpretation of the event or idea.

- **Citation is not required if the information**: is common or cultural knowledge or is easily found in many references, like the date President Kennedy was assassinated or fact that the British had colonized the New World; is information you assimilated as part of your day to day living for which you cannot identify a source – consider that if the fact is that general, it might not even be relevant to your argument.

Don’t wait until you have finished writing your paper and are ready to finish that pesky last step, the works cited page, to begin compiling your list of references. Use the following suggestions help build your in-process works cited list as soon as you begin the research process:

- **Decide where you will keep your list**: Be consistent and anticipate where you will be doing most of your reading: at a table or in front of a computer? Of course, you can do both; just be sure you’re keeping track of what you’re reading. You can even type your list on the last page in the essay file you are using for your paper, which is where your works cited list will eventually appear.

- **Print resources (books, journals, magazines)**: If you have the print source (book, journal, etc.) and intend to keep it for the duration of your project, it is not as essential to write down the publication information immediately. More importantly, be sure to use Post-it notes or a similar tool to keep track of the pages where you find information that you want to include in your paper. You will need to note
each page number in the parenthetical references in the body of your essay after each quote or paraphrase to let your reader know exactly where you read the information. If you photocopy an excerpt from a print source, write down the author and complete publication information on the copy itself (see below).

- **Web-based resources** (websites, electronic journals, articles from databases): If you do all of your web research at the same computer, you can create a folder in your Favorites list and bookmark each page you access. This will insure that you can find the same page again as you continue reading and will not have to search for it again when it comes time to build your works cited page. Because handwriting the URL can be cumbersome, it is a good idea to print the first page of the website instead. Additionally, you must record on your works cited page what date you accessed the web page, so make that part of you notes as well.

- **Using your works cited page to create in-text citations:** In MLA citation, the author of a book and the page number from which you drew the information must be included in the body of your essay to identify where the quoted information can be found. Depending on how you introduce the quote, the citation information may appear as part of your sentence and/or after it (see examples in this and the Incorporating Quotes handout). NOTE: If you prepare your works cited page before or while you write your essay, you will know exactly what parenthetical information to include in the body of your essay, which may be different for web or other non-book sources. The in-text citation must clearly match the entry on the works cited page.

Here is a list of basic information you will need to create an accurate entry for each resource on your works cited page. Some sources may require additional information in the citation entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Periodicals and journals</th>
<th>Websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Author’s full name</td>
<td>• Author’s full name</td>
<td>• Author’s full name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Title of the book, or a part of the book (chapter, etc.)</td>
<td>• Title of article</td>
<td>• Title of the short piece or online book you are citing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name of the editor, translator, complier</td>
<td>• Name of the periodical</td>
<td>• Publication information for any print version of the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edition used</td>
<td>• Series number or name</td>
<td>• Version number of the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of volume used</td>
<td>• Volume number (for a scholarly journal)</td>
<td>• Date of electronic publication, latest update, or posting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name of the series</td>
<td>• Issue number</td>
<td>• Name of subscription service and library (e.g., Proquest and Eli Luria Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• City of publication</td>
<td>• Date of publication</td>
<td>• Page numbers, if available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name of publisher</td>
<td>• Page numbers</td>
<td>• Name of any institution or organization sponsoring the site if not listed earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Date of publication</td>
<td>• (Citing electronic journals requires additional information – see examples below)</td>
<td>• Date of access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Page numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td>• URL of the source, either exactly, or the main site if too complicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to build your works cited entries:

- Determine what types of sources you have (book by one author, work in an anthology, website).
- Find the example below that corresponds to it, or consult the MLA Handbook.
- Identify the publication information in your source necessary to build a works cited entry.
- Follow the directions included after examples to arrange your works cited page.
- If you cannot find some information for a source, include all that is available.
- Pay careful attention to all punctuation and formatting, like underlining.

The examples below are excerpted from MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Sixth Edition. This handout is a quick reference guide; use the MLA Handbook or similar reference for a complete, authoritative description to accurately cite a wide variety of sources.

BOOKS AND OTHER NONPERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS

Most book entries require at least the following:

- **Author’s name**: last name first, then a comma; first and middle name or initial if any, followed by a period. Do not separate hyphenated names: Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de.

- **Title of the Book**: include the full title, the first and then every important word, capitalized, followed by a period; underline book titles; use “quotation marks” for titles of poems, articles, short stories.

- **Publication information**: include the place of publication, followed by a colon; the name of the publisher, followed by a comma; the year of publication, followed by a period.

- **Format**: entries on a works cited page are double spaced and have a hanging indent: the first line is flush with the left margin and the lines that follow are indented one tab space. Do not add additional spaces between entries. (see example, last page of handout)

**Book by a Single Author**


**An Anthology or a Compilation** (entire book, not an article, poem, or short piece – see below)


**Two or More Books by the Same Author** (as they would appear on works cited page)


• **A Book by Two or More Authors** *(list authors in title page order; note first/last name order)*

• **A Work in an Anthology** *(poem, article, or other work in a collection by different authors)*

• **Article in a Reference Book** *(encyclopedias and dictionaries)*

• **An Edition Other than the First** *(a version other than the 1st edition)*

• **A Republished Book** *(like a paperback version of a book originally published as a hardcover)*

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gars AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN PERIODICALS

Most periodical entries require at least the following:

- **Author’s name**: last name first, then a comma; first and middle name or initial if any, followed by a period. Do not separate hyphenated names: Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de.
- **Title of the Article**: include the full title, the first and then every important word, capitalized, followed by a period; enclose titles in “quotation marks.”
- **Publication information**: journal title, underlined; the volume number; the year of publication, in parentheses, then a colon; the inclusive page numbers, followed by a period.

• **An Article in a Scholarly Journal** *(continuous numbering from issue to issue)*

• **An Article in a Scholarly Journal That Pages Each Issue Separately** *(add issue after volume)*

• **An Article in a Newspaper** *(include section letter/number; + = continued on another page)*
• **An Article in a Magazine** *(do not include volume or issue #, even if listed; use + for add. pages)*

• **A Review** *(of a book or performance)*

• **An Anonymous Article** *(do not count a, an, the when alphabetizing on works cited page)*

• **An Editorial** *(add the descriptive label Editorial with no punctuation around it)*

• **A Letter to the Editor** *(add the descriptive label Letter with no punctuation around it)*

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**A Television or Radio Program**


• **A Sound Recording** *(for works other than CD, include medium type, with no extra punctuation)*


• **A Film or Video Recording** *(include director, distributor, year of release)*


• **A Performance** *(include the site and date of the performance)*

• **A Painting, Sculpture, or Photograph** *(include artist’s name, title of work, collection information)*


• **An Interview** *(include interviewee and interviewer, as well as publication info if applicable)*


  Poussaint, Alvin F. Telephone interview. 10 Dec. 1998 *(personal)*

• **A Lecture, a Speech, an Address, or a Reading** *(include speaker’s name, location, date)*
ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

In the order listed, include as much of the following as possible:

- **Author’s name**: last name, first name, followed by a period; usually found at the top or bottom of the webpage; search carefully on websites as there is no standard format for including this.
- **Title and publication information**:
  - title of the article or webpage, in “quotation marks;” start with this if no author name available; if no author, do not alphabetize by a, an, the on works cited page
  - print version information of the web source; see examples and formatting in print sources section above.
- **Electronic publication information**:
  - title of the site, database, online periodical, underlined
  - name of editor of the site
  - version number of the source, or volume and issue of the periodical;
  - date of electronic publication, latest update, or posting (example: 15 May 2007)
  - name of subscription service (like ProQuest) and name and location of subscriber (like the Eli Luria Library)
  - range of page or paragraph numbers, if given
  - name of sponsoring institution or organization (if not cited earlier)
- **Access information**:
  - date researcher accessed the source
  - URL, or if impractically long, the URL of the site’s main page, or from a subscription service, the URL of the service’s home page

- **An Entire Internet Site**

- **A Home Page for a Course**

- **A Personal Home Page**

- **An Online Book** *(include publication information for original print version)*

- **An Online Government Publication**

- **An Article in an Online Periodical** (include volume and issue number; include database if applicable)

- **A Work from a Library or Personal Subscription Service (like ProQuest)** (include database, service, library name and location, and URL of the service’s homepage)
**Guidelines for In-text Citation**

Some important points to consider when deciding how to include in-text citations:

- For each quote or paraphrased idea, the author’s name and page number listed on your works cited page must be included in the body of your essay (see Additional Guidelines below). You can choose to do this in several ways and should consider what format is most readable and least disruptive to your sentence:
  - In the sentence: According to Townsend, Medieval Europe was a place of both terrible atrocities and burgeoning commerce (10).
  - In the parenthetical citation only: Medieval Europe was a place both of “raids, pillages, slavery, and extortion” and of “traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if not cities, and active markets in grain” (Townsend 10).

- References in the text must clearly point to specific sources in the list of works cited.
  - More than one author with same last name, include the first initial: (A. Patterson 183)
  - More than on author, include up to three names: (Patterson, Willis, and Frank 279)
  - More than three authors: (Patterson, et al. 922)
  - More than one reference for an author, include cited, possibly shortened, title after last name: (Patterson “Images”)

- Identify the location of the borrowed information as specifically as possible:
  - For a print source, give the relevant page number or paragraph number.
  - For a literary work or the Bible, also give the stanza, act, scene, line or the chapter and book: (Shakespeare 5.1.5-10) for Act 5 Scene 1 Lines 5-10; (Genesis 5:13) for Genesis chapter 5, verse 13.
  - For a web source, include the section heading if available.

**Additional guidelines:**

| No author listed (often true of a website) | The first piece of information in a works cited entry - the first position – is what is included in parenthesis in the text, whether it is the author, the website title, or the sponsoring organization. Shorten names as necessary, but be sure the reader can identify to which works cited entry you are pointing. | • Website article title: “Cooling Trend in Antartica.” = (“Cooling Trend”)
• Webpage title: CNN.com = (CNN.com)
• Remember to include page or paragraph numbers if available. |
| More than one statement from the same author | In the same paragraph only, if there are no other quotes from another source in between the sentences, and all the quotes appear on the same page in your source text, you may give a single parenthetical reference after the last quotation. Quotes from the same author but from different pages numbers need only the page number in parenthesis. | • Be sure your reader can distinguish your ideas from the quoted data as you analyze them in your paragraph. Use introductory phrases to identify the source of the information in the sentence. (See Incorporating Quotations handout) |
In studying the influence of Latin American, African, and Asian music on modern American composers, music historians tend to discuss such figures as Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, Henry Cowell, Alan Hovhaness, and John Cage (Brindle; Griffiths 104-39; Hitchcock 173-98). They usually overlook Duke Ellington, whom Gunther Schuller rightly calls “one of America’s great composers” (318), probably because they are familiar only with Ellington’s popular pieces, like “Sophisticated Lady,” “Mood Indigo,” and “Solitude.” Still little known are the many ambitious orchestral suites Ellington composed, several of which, such as Black Brown, and Beige (originally entitled The African Suite), The Liberian Suite, The Far East Suite, and The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse.

Not all music critics, however, have ignored Ellington’s excursions into longer musical forms. Raymond Horricks compared him with Ravel, Delius, and Debussy:

The continually enquiring mind of Ellington…has sought to extend steadily the imaginative boundaries of the musical form on which is subsists…Ellington since the mid-1930s has been engaged upon extending both the imagery and the formal construction of written jazz. (122-23)

Ellington’s earliest attempts to move beyond the four-minute limit imposed by the popular

Burnett, James. “Ellington’s Place as a Composer.” Gammond 141-55.


Duke Ellington’s Washington. 2002 Public Broadcasting System. 3 June

http://www.pbs.org/ellingtonsdc/.


–. The Liberian Suite. LP, Philips, 1947.

